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The Princeton Theological Review

a journal by students, alumni/ae, and friends of Princeton Theological Seminary

that the light of God's truth may shine bright and increase

APRIL 2001

DOUBLE ISSUE – PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL

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Proclaiming the Gospel

*Watch your life and your doctrine closely.
Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both
yourself and your hearers.*

I Timothy 4:16

Throughout my time as a seminary student, few passages from Scripture have come back to me with such frequency as this from Paul's letter to Timothy. Paul's exhortation to Timothy to watch, to pay attention to, to guard the relationship between life and doctrine is particularly relevant for us within mainline seminary education, where compartmentalizing life and doctrine, usually with an emphasis on one with a disregard for the other, is a common occurrence.

In our own mainline milieu, it is usually doctrine and theology that is downplayed in favor of the "practical" issues like pastoral care, church administration, and current events. Theology is regarded as something merely to be endured, to regurgitate back on ordination exams, and to be quickly replaced with church growth ideas, counseling agendas, and current issues obsessions. Doctrine becomes in the minds of many in the pulpit a quaint aspect of church life, something anecdotally referred to occasionally in sermons, and reluctantly recalled when a parishioner bothers them with some tedious question about the latest book in the *Left Behind* series.

My own observation is that when the important relationship between Christian life and Christian doctrine is lost, among the first things to go is a passion for evangelism. In church circles where sound doctrine has been replaced with the latest novelties in theological thought and a growing accommodation to prevailing moral standards, evangelism and missions become embarrassments. It's easy to see why. Evangelism and missions are indelibly linked with such off-putting topics like sin, salvation, repentance, and the unique stature of Jesus among the religious options of the world. The typical scenario in such churches is a process of redefinition. Evangelism is

reduced to renewed efforts at friendliness and the establishment of vestibule greeters. Missions become "outreach", usually in terms of food pantries or monthly stints at the local soup kitchen. Such efforts at congregational development and charitable service are commendable and appropriate. But neither substitutes for the bold, consistent proclamation of the mystery of the Gospel delivered, in Paul's words, "in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (I Thessalonians 1:5). To engage in evangelism of this sort requires that we believe something, and the content of that belief is what we mean by doctrine.

This issue of *The Princeton Theological Review* focuses on several aspects of the contemporary challenge facing mainline Protestantism regarding evangelism. Dr. Samuel Moffett vividly describes his own experience in and continued commitment to world evangelism. Dr. James Loder, another professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, writes of the relationship between evangelical witness and a scientific culture. Russell Haitch urges pastors to reconsider the evangelical significance of baptism. And in a dialogue on a sensitive yet ever important issue, Dr. Ellen Charry and Messianic Rabbi Carl Kinbar address questions regarding evangelism and the Jewish people. Benjamin Milner and Rankin Wilbourne, both students at Princeton Seminary, creatively address the idea of Universalism and how it typically enervates any motivation towards evangelism and missions.

If the mainline Protestant church is to survive in the new century before it, it must repent of its compromises of lifestyle and regain its theological nerve by affirming the validity of its doctrinal inheritance. We hope that this issue of *The Princeton Theological Review* may serve as just one tool in the re-appropriation of those resources.

JAMES McCULLOUGH
Executive Editor

Why I Am a Missionary

by Samuel Hugh Moffett

With a subject like this I am trapped into writing about myself and that is dangerous for Christians. We are told to point to Jesus. If I were preaching I would choose for my text 2 Cor. 4:5, "What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake", before venturing any further. And if I were to write less personally from a Biblically theological point of view, it would take a book, not a paper. But allow me to be personal and choose what might be called a "practical theology" approach.

When people ask me *why* I am a missionary, if they want a simple answer, I simply tell them in two words: obedience and love. Obedience because mission to the whole world is what Jesus told his disciples to do: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel." That is the Great Commission. And love, because that, too, is what Jesus told us to do: "Love God with all your heart...and your neighbor as yourself"—the Great Commandment. And that is still what Jesus is telling anyone who would follow him. Trust and obey, go and tell, love and help – and all in the name that is above every name, the only name that saves, the name of Jesus. That is why I am a missionary.

But if they ask me the practical question, *how*, not just *why*, I became a missionary, that is a little more complicated, and far less important than the Commission and the Command. It often helps me, however, to learn how others came to the same decision I did, so I'll write about it—briefly.

The Call to Missions

It began with my father. He went to Korea 110 years ago. He was in the handful of first missionaries that began Protestant work in Korea. When he landed in Korea on his 26th birthday, Seoul had a population of about 150,000 people and there were tigers in the

hills. Today it has a population of more than 12,000,000 and the hills are full of high-rise apartments, not tigers. In 1890, the year he arrived there were less than 200 Protestant Christians on the whole Korean peninsula, north and south. Today the latest statistics report that there are fifteen million Protestants in South Korea alone. From 200 to 15,000,000 in two generations. It was one of the miracles of modern missions.

How did my father affect my missionary call? Well, not quite in the way one might expect. He had five sons. And he told us, as we grew up and went off to college, "Don't become a minister unless you have to." That may seem a rather negative way for a minister father to talk to his sons. But he was wiser than we realized. He didn't say, "Don't be ministers." What he was saying was, "Don't drift into the ministry for the wrong reasons. Don't become a minister just because I'm a minister. Don't be a minister without a call from God through the Holy Spirit, not from me." And as you might guess, four out of his five sons became ordained Presbyterian ministers, and the other became a medical missionary.

At this point, again if I were preaching a sermon I think I would take a different text: John 15:16: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you", because of the way the Lord's challenge to me seemed to move from "Don't be a minister", to "I have to be a minister", and then to "I have to be a missionary."

First, in college since I knew I didn't have to be a minister, I decided I wanted to be a professor of classical Greek. My mother had taught me Latin and Greek

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since I was six or seven years old, and I fell love with the old classics of western civilization: Homer, Socrates and Virgil.

Then one of my older brothers did something that changed my mind. He was a home missionary in North Dakota but was praying that the way would open up for foreign missionary service. Suddenly he was called to India, but how could he leave his little church pastor-less? He called and asked me to come up for the summer and preach. I had never preached a sermon. I hadn't finished college yet, much less been to seminary, but I thought I ought to help him and said yes. By the end of that summer I knew I had to be a minister.

***At one point he stopped and
took out his watch, and said:
"Young men, your watch could
tick for nine and a half years
without numbering the
unbelievers in China alone."***

But not a missionary. That came one day in the Princeton seminary chapel. The chapel speaker was the chairman of the Board of Princeton Seminary, Robert Speer, and since he was also the senior Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Mission, he spoke about missions. At one point he stopped and took out his watch, and said: "Young men, your watch could tick for nine and a half years without numbering the unbelievers in China alone." I could not stop thinking about that statistic. Nine and a half years—tick, tick, tick—as the population exploded, that many people in the great and ancient country of China who had not been told effectively about salvation in Jesus Christ alone. That was my call to mission. For a hundred and fifty years, ever since William Carey, that simple direct, Pauline challenge was the primary

motive for the modern missionary movement—"Every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But how are they to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"—and it was enough to send this preacher to China.

China

How did China affect my missionary call? The lesson I learned in China about how to be a missionary was a lesson in *failure*. And here, if I were preaching a sermon my text would be John 16:33: "In the world you shall have tribulation..." I went to China as an optimist, thinking about the great challenge of winning China's millions and millions of people to Jesus Christ. I was determined that those millions should at least hear the good news of salvation in Christ alone. But within four years I was thrown out of China. I had failed. 1947 was a bad year for a missionary to land in China. There was a war on—nationalists under a Christian general, Chiang Kai-Shek, against the communist leader, Mao Tze-Tung.

I asked some Chinese, "Who will win this war." I was sure they would answer, "The Christian general". But they said, "We're not communists, but we think the communists will win." I asked them "Why?" And they said, "Because the communists are willing to die for their cause, and their opponents are not." And that was my first taste of an unpleasant truth about the state of Christian world missions. The communists, in the early years of their revolution, were more serious about their mission than most of us Christians in the west were about ours.

At one time we had 8,000 Protestant missionaries in China. And we failed. Two years after I reached China the communists had won the war. Two years later I was thrown out of China as an enemy of the Chinese people. After four years as a missionary, I think I was about the most discouraged Christian missionary in the world. I knew we missionaries had made many mistakes. We went to China for Jesus Christ, but the communists won China. They told us flatly, "Once we get rid of you missionaries, the Chinese church will wither away."

Because of a clause in their paper constitution which guaranteed freedom of religion they could not

throw us out just because we were missionaries. So they brought criminal charges against us. My crime, they said, was embezzlement. I was not surprised. I was the mission treasurer in that area – elected by default when the real treasurer left as the communists came in. I was detained, interrogated, and given a public people's trial. I wondered what my sentence would be? I knew I would be found guilty, but what would be the punishment? The little major who had conducted the trial had been very nasty, calling me a running dog of the imperialists and so forth. But when he stood up and said, "We sentence this enemy of the Chinese people to immediate deportation", I almost shouted, "Hallelujah!" It was the best sentence he could have given me. And I was ordered to leave the city the next day for the long journey to the border. All the way I was thinking how badly I had failed as a missionary.

"What made the Korean church grow?" He said, "For fifty years we have lifted up the Word of God before this people, and the Holy Spirit did the rest."

Back in the United States, I found myself talking about mission failure, and our missionary mistakes. Perhaps, in changing times we should have a moratorium on missions. I had been asked to teach at Princeton Seminary, and one day after I had spoken about our China failures at a student meeting, a Chinese student from mainland China, a Christian, came up to me and said, "Dr. Moffett, don't talk like that. You did not fail. God never fails, and He sent you to China." The student was right. So now, if I were preaching a sermon, my text would be the whole verse of John 16:33: "In the world you shall have tribulation, *but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*" God never fails.

When I left China so discouraged, there were roughly 3 million Chinese Christians – about 2 million Catholics, and 1 million Protestants. Today there are 30 million Chinese Christians, and some people say the number may be twice that, perhaps as high as 50 or 60 million. The Church in communist China in the last ten years has been the fastest growing church in the world. Missionaries made a mistake, but it is no mistake to be a missionary.

It was a hard missionary lesson, but I learned it from China: never let our own failures destroy our trust in God. A great missionary to Burma, Adoniram Judson, once said a hundred and more years ago, in the midst of what looked like missionary failure "The future is as bright as the promises of God." God never fails. And by the grace of God, after discouragement in China, the Lord gave me the great privilege of going home, home to Korea in 1955.

Korea

How did Korea affect my missionary call? The lesson I learned in Korea was a lesson from success. What a difference there was between my mission experience in China, and in Korea. I left China almost in despair. I came to Korea to find myself in the middle of a miracle of church growth and enthusiasm.

Some years ago a friend of mine came to Korea to see if the stories of church growth were really true. They were so true that it was almost too much of a shock for him. He wrote,

Methodism began in England with John Wesley, but the largest Methodist church congregation in the world is not in England. It's in Seoul, Korea. Presbyterianism began in Switzerland with John Calvin, but the largest Presbyterian church in the world is not in Switzerland. It's in Seoul, Korea. Pentecostalism, in its modern form, began in Southern California, but the largest Pentecostal church in the world is not in Southern California. It's in Seoul, Korea. (Peter Wagner)

That kind of phenomenal church growth reminded me of another lesson about why I am a missionary. The reason is not that in Korea we missionaries were succeeding—most of the growth by that time should be attributed to the faithful, joyful witness of Korean Christians. Success is no better reason for being a missionary than apparent failure,

as in the China revolution. I had learned the lesson of missionary success from my father years earlier. The first explosions of mass conversions occurred in his territory in the north in 1895 and 1896. Forty years later a commission from the American churches came out to ask him, "What made the Korean church grow?" He said, "For fifty years we have lifted up the Word of God before this people, and the Holy Spirit did the rest."

That sounds too simple, perhaps, but if a missionary does not start there—with the Bible and the Spirit—he or she won't start at all. In Korea it was not the pioneer foreigners—Underwood, Appenzeller, Moffett—who made it grow. And it was not even the Korean pioneer evangelist, Suh Sang-Yoon, who brought the good news into Korea a whole year before the first foreign missionaries had even arrived. It was God, working through them by the Holy Spirit and his written word. God never fails.

But we do—missionaries do, pastors do, evangelists do. We fail. And before I boast too much about the growth of the church in Korea, let's admit that even the best of churches has weaknesses. The Korean church grows, but it also splits, it divides. Where else in the world will you find a "Jesus Presbyterian Church" and a "Christ Presbyterian Church" (and Jesus is not speaking to Christ).

Nevertheless, though all that is true, the lesson still holds: *God never fails*. This is how I found that out. Back in China, after the trial, on our way to the train station a missionary family came out of their house and stopped us, not just to say goodbye. They asked us to take their 8-year old boy out with us. "We can't get out," Mr. Guinness said. "Mrs. Guinness has tuberculosis and we may never get out." Of course we took the boy along. But on the long journey to the border I began to worry.

After the trial I had been taken into a room and told I would be allowed to take \$100 in American money with me. "We'll give you a letter of permission. You sign it, and we'll sign it, and that will make it legal." There was a law against using foreign money. I signed in a hurry and rushed home but I didn't have a hundred American dollars in the house. I had only \$97. After all the stress of the accusations and interrogation I was feeling a bit paranoid. I thought they must have searched the house, discovered only \$97,

and trapped me into signing a paper that would be a lie. Then, along the way they would stop and search me. "There's no 100 dollars. Where's the \$3? You bribed someone."

But nothing happened until Canton, the last stop before the Hong Kong border. But there, as the passengers left the train, they questioned all who were leaving China. Bags and luggage were opened and turned inside out. Then they began a body search. Little Oswald Guinness was watching, and he said, "Uncle Sam are they going to examine me like that." I said, "Don't worry. they're looking only for guns and foreign money mostly." He said, "But I have some American money." I said, "Oh no! How much do you have?" He said, "Three dollars." Never in my life have I been more efficient in taking something out of someone else's pocket and putting it into mine!

Call it a coincidence if you like. I call it a miracle. But don't misunderstand me. I don't believe in God just because of a little three-dollar miracle. And that is not why I am a missionary. My hope and my calling do not depend on that kind of intervention from God. What of the Christians in China who did not get out, who died for their faith? Why were there no miracles for them? But there were—greater miracles than any three dollars: the miracle of life everlasting in Jesus Christ.

I think the "three-dollar" kind of miracle I've told you about is for weak, discouraged, failed missionaries like me as I was when I left China. The good Lord must have looked down and said, "I can't let a missionary of mine stumble out of China like that." So in his amazing grace he chose to minister to my weakness, and used a very little thing to remind me that He is still God. And GOD NEVER FAILS. That is why I am still a missionary.



A Meditation on Evangelism in a Scientific Culture

by James E. Loder

In our inverted culture, where creation has become greater than its Creator, science is sometimes seen as the culprit. But if a careful look at the history of science, with its earth-shaking paradigm shifts, can actually aid the cause of evangelism by helping our minds to appreciate the magisterial magnitude of both science and evangelism. In this way, the proper order of the creation to its Creator might be restored. Here "magnitude" does not just mean the question of large things versus small things.

The great advances in the history of science are so powerful because they range from the big infinity to the little infinity, from relativity theory to quantum phenomena, through the very matter and motion of which we are physically composed. Magnitude thus refers to the totalistic impulse of scientific inquiry, which evinces grandeur that inevitably points beyond itself. These totalistic impulses undo the reductionistic inversions that popularized technology seeks to impose on nature and human nature. Though sometimes thought to be the enemy of faith, serious contemporary science is more congenial to faith than any other "secular" discipline.

Right away this discussion has presupposed a fundamental distinction between science and technology. In the language of Michael Polanyi, a succinct illustration of the difference is that discoveries in technology can be patented but discoveries in science belong to everyone. Technology seeks to turn scientific discovery to human advantage by fitting it into a deterministic context of meaning, whereas science continually confronts an open-ended universe. The advantages of technology notwithstanding, its closed context forecloses dialogue with theology from the

outset. Science, on the other hand, has an open dialogue with theology. This fact explains why scientists such as Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg, Wheeler and others consistently raise questions about God.

Indeed, science points to the good news of which evangelism speaks: the vast totality of creation, its origin and destiny, and the place of each life in and beyond it. When Clerk-Maxwell discovered the mathematical properties of radiation, thus bringing electricity, magnetism and light into a unified conceptual framework, he helped to explain what Einstein later described as the natural expressions of the primary realities of physics. Einstein further probed the nature of light, and in 1905 published his famous paper on special relativity. In that paper, Einstein claimed that space and time, previously assumed to be absolute, were relative to the speed of light. Because he understood light to be the one universal constant, Einstein preferred the name "Invarianz Theorie," though the scientific community and popular society made it the theory of "relativity." But Einstein's theory did not sanction blanket relativism: the speed of light was *the remarkable constant, which did not vary*, and to which everything else was relative. Theologically, this transforming event in the history of science points us back to the claim of Jesus, that he is the light of the world, the constant reference point for all dimensions of creation, physical and otherwise.

Here we encounter a key insight for evangelism. Einstein's theory of relativity inaugurated a tremendous

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paradigm shift within the scientific community. The move from Newton's reality of fixed time and space to Einstein's world of fixed light and a relative space-time continuum is perhaps the greatest scientific reformation of the 20th Century. But an even greater transformation occurs when we come to realize that Einstein's *created* light must itself be relativized by the *uncreated* light of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Of course there is an apophatic aspect to this theological statement; God is both like and unlike any humanly knowable light—but the analogy between created and uncreated light can be illuminating for us, as T.F. Torrance explains in his essay "The Theology of Light." Certainly the analogy is suggested in Scripture, when for example the Psalmist proclaims: "For with You is the fountain of life; in your light we see light" (36:9). In the uncreated light of God revealed in Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world, everything in creation has to be reconsidered and redefined. The shocking implications that follow from what Einstein said about created light recede into platitudes in comparison with the wild grandeur of what follows from what Christian are saying about Jesus Christ, the uncreated light of the world.

In this regard, the Mount of Transfiguration can be seen as exemplary. It is not simply the visage of Jesus, but the ordinary light of day that is transformed in juxtaposition with an epiphany of God's uncreated light. This uncreated light is radiant, bright and glorious in splendor, enough to shake Peter and his companions from their slumber. This light so relativises space and time that Moses and Elijah appear and are talking with Jesus. Perhaps as if to regain ground for culture, Peter suggests building traditional booths to hold the epiphany. But cultural appropriations are inadequate to contain the light of God and the voice of God that speaks from the cloud. In the uncreated light of God, we can be freed from barriers constructed by culture, and even from so-called natural limitations. In this way, Christian experience can perceive and indwell what is beyond our natural eyes.

In the first part of his essay, Professor Torrance focuses on the constancy of light and by analogy the constancy of God's truth in Jesus Christ. He observes how we may find it strange that while the speed of a bullet fired from a moving car is the speed of the gun's propulsion plus the speed of the car, a light signal sent

from the same car remains constant, whether the car is stationary or moving fast. The invariance here does not suggest anything deterministic or static. Rather, there is dynamic interplay everywhere in the empirical universe, even while light remains reliably constant. Kierkegaard spoke of the "unchangeableness of God," which is yet attentive to every intricate changing detail of creation. The relationality between God and creation is full of mystery and surprises. The radical variations in all creation are everywhere associated with the invariant properties of God's truth. Thus emerges a pattern of ultimate contingency. Even though the physical

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universe is everywhere associated with the physical properties of light, this rational order would have no reliable basis unless the constancy of the physical were in turn grounded in the self-sufficient uncreated light of the eternal God.

This invariant constancy is found in the truth that Jesus gives to us in order to set us free. "Let me tell you," the evangelist says in effect, "this is the glorious liberty of the children of God: in light of the reality into which Christ invites you, relativity becomes relative. Thus, the meaningless independence of all created things dissolves and all these lesser lights of the world shine with the luminosity of their ontological origins in God who is the light of lights." The person who walks in the ultimate invariant light of lights is free to pay full attention

to the particularities of creation. This freedom enables a spiritual stretch of the soul from the big infinity to the infinitely varied particularities of everyday life as each polarity enriches the other. The requisite movement entails surrendering the bondage of a false human “freedom” for sake of the freedom of God, in whom there is no limit: “the truth will set you free” in ways that His truth alone can illuminate.

A second important aspect of the analogy between physical and uncreated light concerns the transparency or invisibility of light. In the faces of those who truly hear the good news, even and especially for the first time, the love of God is made manifest. Light makes itself transparent, and in its very quality of invisibility, it brings to light what is beyond itself. It brings to light that to which it relates, whether good or evil. This dynamic is preeminently evident in the illuminating reciprocal relationality of Jesus and the Spirit. This reciprocal relationality between Jesus and the Spirit is the very thing that reveals the Father. This Trinitarian relationality is the inner life of God, and it in turn illuminates all who participate in this life. Believers are taken up in the Spirit, even as the three members of the Trinity illuminate each other in the irradiating beauty of holiness. The life of Christ is recapitulated in the lives of disciples, who are told to let their light so shine before people that it will reveal their heavenly Father and redound in praise to him.

A third aspect of the analogy concerns the way in which light is not a mute force, but relates to sound and other phenomena in the space-time continuum. In common experience, though there is an obvious distinction between sight and sound, eye and ear, still the sounds of language relate to light, so that we may say, “I see what you mean.” If sound can illuminate, then conversely, light can speak; as Augustine said, “God speaks to us by illuminating.” When Jesus is seen as the visible and illuminated Word of God, then people can know what God means—what God means by God and what God means by humanity. The evangelical strives to bring these meanings to light, making evident the greatest of all paradigm shifts, in which Jesus Christ—the Word of God, God from God, Light from Light—becomes the definitive view of reality for the hearer.

Of course sound is not left out. But in this paradigm shift sound itself expands for the hearer. Words somehow become capable of speaking about what is

ineffable. In the realm of science, Einstein’s discoveries offer insight into how hearing allows us to tune into the sound of God’s work in creation. In her book *Einstein’s Unfinished Symphony*, Marsha Bartuska explains how gravity makes sounds that reverberate throughout the universe. The ancient Pythagoras may have been wrong about the spherical nature of the heavens, but his concept of the music of the spheres points toward the music that, science now tells us, emanates from gravitational events which occur in an expanding universe. Perhaps in some way this moaning sound relates to the groaning (as in childbirth) that the whole creation experiences on its way to obtaining glorious freedom from bondage to decay (Rom. 8:21-22). Though this latter sound is not usually associated with music, all phenomena are transformed in light of God’s ultimate purposes. This groaning declares the purposes of God, being worked out through the ages, declaring his grandeur as author, sustainer and redeemer of creation.

To enter the paradigm shift—in which Jesus Christ becomes not just a person in history, but the reference point for all temporal and spatial events—entails a decisive and irreversible transformation of the grand axioms of one’s existence. Just as Einstein’s paradigm shift meant there was no going back to the old Newtonian order, so spiritually, we may say that one does not enter the new Christian reality by simply learning a new password into a community where participation is reversible and the natural order remains definitive of everyday life. Rather, the natural is redefined by the supernatural, and the community is created and sustained not by the forces of socialization but by the spiritual presence of Christ. All liturgical “passwords” are taken up in the ultimate Word of God. Moreover, in this community evil is unmasked by the deep, intense passion of faith. The Christian faithful worship the invisible transparent One whose light exposes the deeds of darkness, betrays betrayal as an illusion, and brings death to death.

The community of faith has a culture, but a culture that is embodied in the one person, Jesus, who is both fully God and fully human, the light of the world who speaks through the language of Scripture. Where theological language shapes this culture, this language is properly generated from and expressed through the passion of worship. This language is specifically designed to negate ordinary cultural forms, in order to

reappropriate them at a higher magnitude, so that they become doxological and eucharistic. When theological language is kept in dialectical tension with the Word of God, it thus properly intends to tear open the cognitive veil that could make theology stand between humans and their transparent participation in worship as a paradigm of reality. The paradigm of worship may be seen in the baptism of Jesus, when the heavens are torn open, bringing to light the epiphany of the Holy Spirit and the voice of the Father. In this manner, theological culture is most illuminating when it is designed to disappear, to become transparent before the immediate Presence of the One who has brought the community into being.

II

Now the foregoing analogy between the created light of Einstein's physics and the uncreated light of Christ may provoke objections—that it is making too much of a metaphor, or that it relies anachronistically on a first-century worldview. In response it may be said that the liberation of love revealed herein is precisely what human life—individually, corporately and culturally—longs for in this present scientific era, as in all eras since the first century. Further, what the analogy discloses is not mere metaphorical talk but power.

Consider my friend John, an evangelist who lives and works as a Christian on the streets of Los Angeles, in a neighborhood rife with gang activity. To immerse himself in the community, he sells pencils on the street corner. The pencils help identify him with an impoverished neighborhood, and they prompt the sort of conversations that help deeply troubled and potentially violent youth to come into the Christian community that he and his wife hold open to them. John and his wife have gained so much respect from these neighborhood gangs that they are given protection from intruders or other gangs. Gradually, one by one, the gang members come under the influence of this potentially world-changing ministry. As John knows, it is the Spirit of Christ, not he, who ultimately evangelizes, often by abrogating human techniques for the sake of a higher order of communication.

One afternoon, for example, John was walking down the street and spotted a teenager he knew painting on the walls of the alley. Taggers are illegal of course, always on the run to keep ahead of the police.

John thought he should go down there and try to get this young man back on track. Yet as one who works in intimacy with the Spirit, he sensed that voice warning him not to go; still he decided to walk down the alley anyhow.

Very shortly, he saw why there had been warning. Down the alley came another young man, high on something and waving a gun. Walking right up to John he thrust the pistol to his forehead, between the eyes, ominously declaring, "I am going to waste you!" But John does not live where such a threat could have definitive power. He was not afraid. Rather, the Spirit filled John so quickly and fully that he felt a deep calm and at the same time he rose up in strength; more firmly than the threat, he said to the assailant, "God's going to make you a whole new man!" Confused and frustrated, the drug-user waved his gun and said, "I've got six bullets here and I'm going to kill six people." Right away John said, "God doesn't want anyone to die!" The man then turned his gun on the tagger who cringed and begged for mercy. The bully, his drug-inflated ego now satisfied, marched away.

What John's story demonstrates so graphically is the power that comes from intimacy with the Spirit of the Lord of all Creation; here it is the power to redefine an apparently threatening situation. In the evangelical claim upon a lifetime, this is what is at stake: the continual power to redefine reality in keeping with the loving purposes of God. Evangelism needs to be that deep and wide. The point of the story is not simply that a personal fear of death was removed, but reality was redefined for all involved. Minds shaped in a scientific culture are turned off when evangelism seems to shrink reality to the measure of personal needs, conventional morality and superego edicts. Evangelism must be about the business of expanding (not shrinking) the individual's sense of reality. Science teaches that we discover new and larger dimensions of reality even as we are thinking about it; and evangelism, properly understood, confirms and ramifies that principle.

Another related charge may be brought against evangelism by the scientific mind: "your view of Jesus Christ," it will be said, "is too narrow and historically bound to speak to our ever changing vision of an expanding universe that will eventually redefine history and yield to a scientific understanding of everything." In response it should be observed that

this presumptuously grander view is strikingly narrow in respect to the way that it leaves out the person of the knower and discoverer in the knowing and discovery process. Even in a theory of everything, as superstring theory may purport to be, comprehension is itself uncomprehended and the human factor is left adrift. Any purported theory of everything that fails to encompass the mind of the one composing the theory is no theory at all. As Einstein put it, the most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible. When we apprehend that all creation, including humans, is already comprehended in the mind of God, this insight makes intelligible our place in the universe and our drive to comprehend ourselves.

However, we are not making a case to consider the mind of God simply to give our understandings larger intelligibility. Rather, most consequential is the new reality toward which this consideration points. Even if a proof for the existence of the mind of God could be established, the evangelical “technology” that would permit it to make a known difference would remain obscure. In the new paradigm of reality, defined by the claims of Christ, no such technology of application is required. The power in which my friend John speaks does not require or permit domestication through technique. Rather this power works on the human factor from the inside out, so to speak, so that the “technique” is new and accurate for every new situation; thus it represents a transformation of power itself, at the same time it lovingly transforms the people in its midst. In this situation, it was clearly more efficient and effective than the techniques of gun control, policing and legislation—good as those methods may be. But in contrast to this power of God’s Spirit, merely human methods are (to take a metaphor from technology) like working on cataracts in the eye with a knife or scissors, when surgery by laser light does the whole thing in less than ten minutes.

To make a further point, even when medical technology moves forward in helpful directions, it still does not reach the new reality and power of which evangelism speaks. In this new reality created by his spiritual presence, Jesus transforms all medical technology. Jesus heals: that is, Jesus continues to heal more efficiently than the best techniques we can discover, and he does so in a much bigger manner. To be restored functionally is not the ultimate goal; all healing needs

to be understood in the context of the new reality he creates, because the underlying disorder to which physical disease points is more than functional. This new reality is concerned with the whole person—body, soul and spirit.

There is the Scriptural dictum that says we become like what we worship. There is the further observation that we tend to appreciate, adore, and even worship the source of what heals us. Medical and surgical healing should not seduce us into becoming like the technology that restores us to functional capacity. What heals us should not move us toward being dehumanized. Healing should not shrink our vision of who we are and the glory of our human destiny. When Jesus heals, our vision of our identity and destiny is magnificently enhanced; eternity comes rushing in to the present, the life of God engenders wholeness, and we, in worshipping him, become as he is.

Evangelism means opening human eyes to the ultimate light that defines all lesser lights in eternal and eschatological perspective. Evangelism should never be reduced to technology—a technique-driven approach to evangelism is reductionistic of human destiny and portrays God as a fool trying to save the world by gimmickry. We would do far better to speak of the *science* of evangelism. The science of evangelism may occasionally give rise to technology, but our approach should remain scientific; that way, technologies will be humbly shaped, even eliminated when they do not serve God’s deeper purpose. The true evangelist dwells day and night in the ultimate paradigm shift where ordinary reality is decisively redefined by the living presence of Jesus Christ. Then, and only then, can he or she discern what the Spirit of Christ is doing and so enter into doing “the good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life” (Eph. 2:10).



Baptism and Becoming Christian

by Russell Haitch

How does one become a Christian? And what does it mean to *be* Christian? In answering these questions, the evangelical mind may seem least inclined to turn to baptism. For centuries, since John Wesley at any rate, preachers have used water baptism as a foil, saying that it does not secure eternal life; instead there must be a conscious decision and heartfelt conversion. But there is another way of looking at baptism—to see it as a cornerstone of Christian evangelism and ongoing education.

In the past, evangelicals have expended much energy in opposing the concept of baptismal regeneration. While the history and theory behind this opposition needs to be understood and appreciated, it will also be good to go beyond it, in order to discover baptism's excellent pedagogical potential. Baptism, both as an event and as a pattern, reveals significant features of what it means to become Christian. Such discovery, or perhaps rediscovery, is especially needed today. Aside from reviewing historical features, this essay will suggest how a renewed understanding of baptism can help churches to meet two pressing educational needs in their present missions work.

The first is the need to explain the *discontinuity* between faith in Christ and other faiths. In a pluralistic age, the exclusive-sounding claims of evangelicals are especially scandalous, and so the uniqueness of Christianity requires educational support. The second is the need to explain the *continuity* between the new birth and the new life, and in turn between this new life and the rest of creation. In an individualist age, the personal-sounding claims of evangelicals invite misperception that faith in Jesus is just a private, feel-good affair, and so the universality of the Christian

vision likewise calls for explication. The teaching of balanced Trinitarian theology, epitomized in baptism will address both of these needs.

Jesus in the Jordan

In discerning what it means to “become Christian,” a good starting place is the river Jordan. In stepping into Jordan “to fulfill all righteousness,” Jesus takes the first step toward Calvary. His baptism may be called a step of solidarity with sinners. It is also more than that. It has even been said that baptism is when Jesus himself “became Christian.” At Jordan, Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. Mark says this baptism, prepared by John and foretold by prophets, signals “the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.”¹

The first disciples saw Jesus' baptism as being decisive. In Acts, Peter recalls how it marked the start of “the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us”²; and the start of when “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power”—a power that enabled him “to do good and to heal all those who were under the power of the devil.”³ This “Holy Spirit and power” aspect of baptism calls for greater attention. None of the Gospels (or any other Scripture) directly addresses the question of infant versus believers' baptism; but all four distinguish the water baptism of John from the Spirit baptism of Jesus. That repeated demarcation has often been overlooked, yet given the tremendous upsurge of the Pentecostal

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movement—from about zero to over 400 million adherents in less than a century—the question of water baptism versus Spirit baptism is now more significant than the older debate of infants versus adults. We will turn to both questions momentarily.

In the early church, the baptism of Jesus was a more important liturgical day than the incarnation, and the Jordan river became the most important river in the world. When believers wanted to become “anointed ones” (Christians), they often tried to trek to Jordan for baptism. Tertullian reports that some traveled from as far away as North Africa, and Eusebius says that Constantine’s hope of going there led him to postpone baptism until the end of his days. Since it was hard for people to go to the Jordan—Constantine never made it—eventually the Jordan was brought to people: in the early church, a common name for the baptismal font was “the Jordan.”⁴

If devotion to a particular river proved to be a theological detour, the reason for its significance remained: Jesus had stepped into it, and the early theologians, like the disciples, saw this step of baptism as decisive. Here, says Irenaeus, is where “the Word of God, . . . who

When Peter gives his “altar call” in the sermon of Acts 2, we do not hear him lead the crowd in a modern “sinners’ prayer” for salvation; rather he urges them to “repent and be baptized.”

took flesh and was anointed with the Spirit by the Father, became Jesus Christ.”⁵ Here the Father anointed the Son with the Holy Spirit. While Irenaeus goes so far as to call baptism the event in which Jesus “became Jesus Christ,” it is not as though the Father suddenly adopted Jesus as his Son; thus Irenaeus speaks of two anointings: the Word was anointed in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, and the Word-become-flesh was anointed

in time in the Jordan.⁶ There were “adoptionists” in the early church, and fear of being in league with them may have led church fathers to downplay Jesus’ baptism. Still it received a fair degree of preaching attention.⁷

Scripture attests that for believers in the early churches, baptism was their decisive action too. Baptism expressed a person’s faith and desire to become Christian. When Peter gives his “altar call” in the sermon of Acts 2, we do not hear him lead the crowd in a modern “sinners’ prayer” for salvation; rather he urges them to “repent and be baptized.”⁸ Throughout the New Testament church, water baptism was how people responded to gospel preaching. Prayer may well have figured into this baptism, but baptism evidently marked the turning point in becoming Christian.

Infant versus Believers’ Baptism

Believers’ baptism was widespread in the early missionary-minded church. Many influential leaders, including those born to Christian parents—for example, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianus, John Chrysostom, Ephraem the Syrian, Jerome, Rufinus and Augustine—were not baptized until the end of their student days.⁹ Ambrose had not yet been baptized when he was acclaimed bishop of Milan.

Historical evidence points clearly to an early origin for infant baptism as well (at least by the time of Tertullian in the West, and of Origen in the East), though the psychological and theological motivations behind the practice are less clear. It is sometimes supposed the practice of infant baptism increased due to an explicit doctrine of original sin, but Jaroslav Pelikan has suggested that the latter developed after the former, perhaps as its theological rationale. Some scholars assert infant baptism was practiced from the start. If so, was it the consequence of a code whereby the household head wielded power over the rest? Such a justification would be less defensible today. Was it the consequence of a covenantal understanding that made baptism parallel to circumcision? Calvin and others asseverate that this was and should be the case; but the objection may be raised that this parallelism turns typology into theology without adequately noting differences between circumcision and baptism, as well as discontinuities between the old and new covenants.¹⁰

At any rate, it is noteworthy that nearly all proponents of paedobaptism seek to preserve the close bond between human faith and the grace of baptism, for this bond keeps the sacrament from becoming magic—or what Alexander Schmemmann calls “a totally extrinsic and arbitrary act destroying man’s freedom.”¹¹ This requisite faith is variously said to inhere in the innate trust of the infant, or to follow consciously at confirmation, or to come in surrogate fashion from parents or sponsors or the church

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community as a whole. Perhaps one of the earliest and best justifications is the one still taught in Eastern Orthodox churches today: the requisite faith (and faithfulness) come from Jesus Christ himself, intrinsic in the Church that is his body. Perhaps too such an understanding calls for a lower view of individuality and higher view of church than Protestants have been wont to embrace. At any rate, it appears that wherever the early churches baptized infants, faith of some sort was crucial; they sought to maintain the tight connection between belief and baptism found in Mark 16 and implied throughout the New Testament. For instance, one tombstone inscription dated from the 3rd century declares: “I, Zosimus, a believer from believers, lie here having lived 2 years, 1 month, 25 days.”¹²

Vast centuries of theological debate separate us from the infant Zosimus. Over time baptism as a starting point for the Christian life became problematic, especially for evangelicals who claimed that one becomes a Christian by personal commitment, even a heartfelt conversion. In theory, baptism could still have marked such a commitment. The sequence

found in Acts 2—of preaching, followed by conviction of sin, followed by a call to repentance and baptism—could well have remained valid, except that many of the people to whom the revivalists were preaching had already been baptized as infants. While radical reformers had charted a different course, and while rebaptism was not uncommon in other churches, nevertheless other rituals developed to mark the start of the Christian life. Prime among these was the “altar call,” which does not require water or even an altar, but a personal prayer of surrender and salvation, in which one yields one’s life to Christ, asking Jesus to indwell the believing heart by his Holy Spirit. Hence, regeneration or the “new birth” became aptly correlated with this prayerful surrender, which in turn became a touchstone of evangelical Christianity.

Among the first revivalists there was some attempt to embrace both the baptismal regeneration of infants and a subsequent experiential regeneration of adults, even if reconciliation of the two ideas proved difficult. Unless John Wesley is seen to be self-contradictory, a compilation of his teachings suggests a doctrinal pattern whereby the infant is regenerated in water baptism (needed to wash original sin), but then by about age eight or nine human sin has decimated this baptismal grace; hence the further need to be born again (again) as an adult. Subsequent revivalists may have seen Wesley’s schema as his valiant attempt to remain the good Anglican, but most did not follow his lead, and the idea of infant baptismal regeneration fell by the wayside.

However, it certainly did not fall from hymnals and books of worship in mainline churches, and this situation presents a problem for evangelicals within those churches today. The United Methodist *Hymnal*, for example, states that in the Sacrament of Baptism we are “given new birth through water and the Spirit.” The *Presbyterian Book of Worship* is even more emphatic, saying that through the water of baptism “we are reborn by the power of the Holy Spirit,” then asking God to send the Spirit to make “this water...a fountain of deliverance and rebirth,” and then again praying that “this font may be your womb of new birth.” All this is presumed to apply to infants, who are the most frequent candidates for baptism in these churches. Granted these words are not always said, and if said not always fully heard; but still there is a discrepancy of paradigms, in which baptism becomes

the loser. A great claim is being made for it, but is the claim fully credible and supported by subsequent actions of the church? When confirmation is seen as “completing” baptism, or when there is a delay before receiving communion, does it send a message that the deal, to use crass language, has not been fully sealed? Meanwhile, evangelicals observing infant baptisms (whether with tacit approval or dismay) may be quietly holding out for the “real thing,” a personal prayerful surrender of one’s life to Christ.

If that evangelical sentiment is expressed, staunch defenders of paedobaptism can easily grow impatient and berate the evangelical mind for having too mean an understanding of grace, or too exalted a view of individual will, or too rational a concept of faith. No doubt there is often much truth in these charges. Evangelical teaching does well to acknowledge that becoming Christian cuts very deep and it cuts across time.

“Nowadays,” he writes, “the difficulty in becoming Christian is that one must self-actively transform an initial being-Christian into a possibility in order to become Christian in truth.”

When were you saved? I was saved when Jesus Christ was crucified and raised, even though I was not yet born; then, too, I was saved at age nine on the night I gave my heart to him; further, I am being saved day by day as I walk according to the Holy Spirit; and I will be saved on the day of Judgment because I have been joined to Jesus and immersed into the inner life of God. Baptism betokens all that, in its death-and-resurrection pattern, and in the idea of baptism (*baptizo*) as being plunged. Both this pattern and a large view of grace and salvation are vital to understanding Christian faith. At the same time, they do not *a priori* es-

tablish the validity of infant baptism as being the starting point for becoming Christian. In simplest terms, the problem is that personal repentance of the sort everywhere in the New Testament associated with becoming Christian is here missing.

The people who have noted this fact are not all aligned with “Baptist” denominations, nor can all be dismissed as Pelagianists. Søren Kierkegaard decried infant baptism, because he said it presumed to make people become Christians before they were old enough to choose for Christ; consequently, a later decision for Christ must at least entertain the possibility of undoing one’s baptism. “Nowadays,” he writes, “the difficulty in becoming Christian is that one must self-actively transform an initial being-Christian into a possibility in order to become Christian in truth.”¹³

He goes on: “I think the dubiousness of becoming a Christian at the age of two weeks cannot be expressed more strongly than by pointing out that by its help it is possible to find Christians—who have not yet become Christians...In other words, a person who actually has become a Christian must certainly have had a period when he was not a Christian; he must in turn have had a period when he found out what Christianity is; then, in turn, if he has not totally forgotten how he existed before he became a Christian, he must be able for his part to say what Christianity is by comparing his earlier life with his Christian life.”¹⁴ This outline fairly resembles the prototype of a modern evangelical testimony, and it has of course been challenged by those who grew up in “Christian homes”; but Kierkegaard’s essential point is that to become Christian a person must at some point make a choice for Christ, a choice that arises from an existential need—“a need that I do not think even the most doting mother will discover in her infant at the young age of two weeks.”¹⁵

When Christianity came into the world, he says, “it was difficult to become a Christian, and one did not become occupied with understanding Christianity. Now we have almost reached the parody that to become a Christian is nothing, but it is difficult and a very busy task to understand it. Everything is thereby reversed. Christianity is transformed into a kind of philosophical theory; but Christianity essentially relates itself to existence, and becoming a Christian is what is difficult.”¹⁶

Karl Barth's critique of infant baptism, though less mordant than Kierkegaard's, is even more extensive and carefully laid out. For him, infant baptism is "profoundly irregular"¹⁷, and yet the Church has made it customary, abusively so. He asks, "how can the Church be or become again...an essentially missionary and mature rather than immature Church, so long as it obstinately, against all better judgment and conscience, continues to dispense the water of baptism with the same indiscriminating generosity as it has now done for centuries?...Of what help will the best ecclesiology be to us so long as there is obstinate evasion of long overdue reform at this small but practically decisive point?"¹⁸

More recently, Jurgen Moltmann added his voice of opposition of paedobaptism. Moltmann says that Christian baptism is supposed to be "eschatology put into practice"¹⁹; baptism is "a public, confessional sign of resistance and hope,"²⁰ and this sign does not beacon well when infant baptism has become the general rule. He concludes: "There can be no reform of baptism without a reform of the church, and no reform of the church without a reform of baptism."²¹

Toward a New Approach to Baptismal Education

Though a mighty triumvirate of Kierkegaard, Barth and Moltmann has challenged infant baptism, the practice continues unabated, at least in most "main-line" churches. The fact that it remains so entrenched may speak either of the high regard with which it is held, or the low impact (or slow impact) of theologians upon church practices. Of course there have also been other capable theologians who continue to argue in favor of infant baptismal regeneration. Meanwhile, for some people the ritual has taken on a different meaning, not fully related to the language of regeneration expressed in its rituals. For example, becoming a "child of the covenant" may be seen simply as an act of socialization into church activities, the first step toward Sunday school.

The educational question today is not primarily about infant versus believer baptism (whether believers' baptism will become the rule, or whether the church's commitment to infant baptism will regain its theological profundity). Important as this question may be, there is the quite basic question of how to teach people what baptism means for the living

out of their daily lives. What is the connection between the liturgical event—whether it takes place in the Jordan or in the sanctuary, in infancy or adulthood—and the ensuing life of the Christian? Such teaching about the meaning of baptism would need to precede reform in the direction Barth and Moltmann have advocated; and it would be of equal benefit to those who believe no such reform is necessary.

If baptism was a touchstone event in becoming Christian for the first believers, and even in some sense

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for Jesus himself, then we may anticipate that it still has much to teach about what it means to become Christian today. This teaching, we may now propose, involves the experiential event of baptism—that event is critical—but it also equally involves the Trinitarian pattern of baptism, its inherent logic or grammar. In each sacrament, let us say, there is what might be called the sacramental dynamic, the pattern or grammar that recapitulates the movement of God's Spirit and points us back to the primordial sacrament, which is properly identified as Christ in the church. To see the sacramental action as an ongoing movement that permeates daily life can save people from supposing the sacraments are merely God's grace making a series of cameo appearances in an otherwise secular life.

The baptismal pattern depicts dynamic relationality. It begins, in the Jordan. That event is an *icon* of the relationality between the Father and the Son through the Spirit. The Jordan event, in turn,

becomes an icon of the relationality of the church. This relationality is set in order and set in motion by the Spirit who proceeds from the Father through the Son. Like the concepts of *perichoresis* and *koinonia*, baptism describes relationality that pertains first to the life of God and then to the life of the church. But baptism has the potential to express its concept in a tangible, experiential way.

Before we explain the implications of the Trinitarian baptismal pattern, we pause to acknowledge the need for Trinitarian teaching as part of the mainline churches' missionary endeavor, a topic of consideration for the current journal. Sometimes, the real problem is not convincing people overseas that they need Christ, but persuading the church that missionary work makes sense. In the 19th century there was a tug of war within Christianity over whether one should become a Christian through an immediate, heartfelt event, or gradually, through infant baptism and education. In these debates the desirability of becoming Christian was hardly doubted. But quite the opposite is true in the 20th and 21st centuries. The Roman Catholic educator Thomas Groome also represents many "progressive" Protestants in his dim view of missionary endeavors where the goal is to win people to Christ. If a person was "reared in another rich religious tradition, but has become lax," he says, then the evangelist should encourage him or her to make a renewed commitment to that other religion, for "surely God uses Christian evangelizers to help people become better Jews, Moslems, Buddhists, etc. or simply 'better people.'" ²²

In a pluralistic age this idea resonates with many people, which is why evangelicals need to teach about the uniqueness of Christian faith and how this Trinitarian faith is intrinsic to becoming "better people." Many do not see Christianity as a necessity, especially in comfortable towns of the Western world, where the presence of competing spirits seems less obvious and liberation through the Spirit of Christ less urgent. How do orthodox Christians respond to the common belief that sufficient good and truth must certainly reside in all "major world religions"? We can attack the other religions. We can quote John 14:6 and Acts 4:12, trusting that God's Word will not return void. We can even say that the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power, and then show them what power we have. We can do many things. But it

will be best if we (and those we teach) also perceive how the Christian life is different from other lives because the Triune God is different from other gods. This is one place that Christian education can build, and baptism can become its cornerstone.

Such education can help in another way as well. Within evangelical circles, especially in the West, there is the problem of what is sometimes called "easy

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believism." Though infant baptism can succumb to socialization forces, rituals of experiential regeneration are also not immune; after a prayer for "new birth," there does not always follow a new life. Yet of course the two are meant to be contiguous, just as justification and sanctification imply one another. Embedded in Jesus' baptism, and then in ours, we find important themes about what it means to become and to be Christians: a Trinitarian theology, a Spirit Christology and a "New Creation" ecclesiology. These baptismal themes relate to one another, and to all key concepts in Christian theology. To demonstrate the generative nature of these themes in baptismal education, we could refer to the Trinitarian benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14, and notice how baptism teaches about "The love of God, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit."

Trinitarian Theology

After Jesus stepped into the waters of the Jordan, the heavens opened, the Holy Spirit descended upon

him; and the Father said, “this is my Son, whom I love.”²³ Here is the love of the Father. This is where our Christian life also begins, in this loving relationality found in the inner life of the Trinity. The baptism in the Jordan is the first epiphany of the Trinity in the cosmos.²⁴ The life of the church is likewise meant to manifest the life of the Trinity. Hence, the church receives its missionary charge to make disciples of the nations—“baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” and

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teaching them how to abide in God’s love.²⁵ Thus the need for teaching arises—teaching the commands, and also teaching how the Trinitarian “formula” of baptism is not just an archaic repetition from a patriarchal age, but rather an active invitation to participation in the inner life of God. To call upon the name is to invoke the authority and the personality to which the name refers.

The baptism of Jesus revealed the Trinity to human experience, noted the church fathers. God condescended to human senses—the Father to hearing, the Son to touch, the Spirit to sight.²⁶ God was born of our flesh, so that we may be born of his Spirit; and, the early church proclaimed, “to be born of baptism is to be born of the Trinity.”²⁷ To become a Christian through Trinitarian baptism, they said, is to come into the relationality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that has existed from eternity. However a person becomes a Christian in his or her personal history, it is important to see this eternal dimension. If we see that, it may keep us from a self-centered

understanding of our new identity in Christ. The Biblical idea is not that God was lonely, and so he had to create people in order to have someone to love. Aside from placing undue pressure on us to make God feel fulfilled, this view fails to see that the love of God is fully sustaining from the start, and this love is inherently relational.

If we see that, it can also put us right in step with much postmodern discourse, and in some sense a step ahead: the postmodern mind endeavors to think relationally, to affirm that relationality is in fact the reality of life. Yet relationality is not merely a series of attempts by the ego to transcend its self-centeredness. Loving, life-giving relationality comes from God for it exists within God’s Triune nature; and we can enter into this relationality by being plunged into this inner life—baptized into the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is the love of God.

Spirit Christology

Baptism also teaches about the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—grace that he received, and then grace that he imparts. In addition to a Trinitarian theology, baptism speaks of what Colin Brown and others have called a “Spirit” Christology.²⁸ What do we mean by this? When Jesus was baptized and received the Holy Spirit’s anointing, he became “christian” (anointed) and his mission began in earnest. Peter says, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power,” so that he could “do good and heal all who were under the power of the devil.” But importantly, Peter’s further implication here is that after Pentecost God also stood ready in the same manner to anoint Peter of Bethsaida and Cornelius of Caesarea, as well as Jane or Bob of Princeton.

Jesus said that he could do nothing by himself,²⁹ but only the works he saw the Father doing; and he said that those who believed in him could do these same works and even greater ones.³⁰ What is he saying here? Could it be that though he never ceased to be fully God in nature, it was at his baptism that Jesus received power to live as a fully Spirit-filled human being? It was, after all, at his baptism that Jesus began to fulfill all righteousness. It was baptism that marked the beginning of his self-emptying mission.³¹

This idea connects with the doctrine of *theosis* or divinization, a teaching probably first expressed by

Irenaeus, though Athanasius' succinct expression is most memorable: God became human, so that humans can become like God. The concept is clearly inchoate in Scripture.³² This process begins in the

Sometimes evangelicals in the two-thirds world object to Western methods. "You get people saved readily enough," they say, "but you don't get them cleaned up spiritually—you don't heal them from the power of the devil."

incarnation, but baptism is also significant. In poetic language, Irenaeus explains that the Spirit descends on Jesus at his baptism, so that the Spirit "might get accustomed to dwell in the human race, to repose on humans, to reside within the work God has modeled, working the Father's will in them and renewing them from oldness to newness in Christ."³³ Through Christ's baptism, the Holy Spirit warms up to humanity as it were, and humanity in turn becomes more "apt for God."³⁴

This process of *theosis* or divinization is purely one of grace. When I teach or preach about the grace of Christ, I often suggest that one can think of this grace as both position and power. Grace is first a *position* (as Ephesians 2:6-7 says) of being raised up and seated with Christ Jesus in the heavenly realms; but second (as Ephesians 4:7-8 says) grace is *power* to do good works of service on earth (Ephesians 4:12).

Both aspects of grace are important. Sometimes evangelicals in the two-thirds world object to Western methods. "You get people saved readily enough," they say, "but you don't get them cleaned up spiritually—you don't heal them from the power of the devil." Of course for a long time we have not believed there

was a devil who had any power; we have believed in rational commitments to Christ and frequent sermons about backsliding. In the patristic period, baptism was preceded by a period of daily exorcisms, where ministers prayed over candidates, often for hours at a time; and the baptismal rite itself was accompanied by exorcism—the water itself was exorcised, the candidate was told to spit at Satan, and so on. Did they overdo it? In their view, they were taking back territory from the enemy; reclaiming creation.³⁵ Calvin inveighed against these exorcisms, but in retrospect it is questionable whether the streamlined Protestant versions of baptism educate fully about the power of evil, as well as the even greater power of God to cleanse and heal.

In baptism we receive the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and baptism also gives us the most fitting image for how this power is received. "If we have been united with Christ in his death then (i.e., only then) we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."³⁶ The pattern of death and resurrection is central to baptism, as evinced not only in Romans 6, but also in Mark 10:38f. and Luke 12:50. "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"³⁷ If this is not well known, it may be due—in part—to the fact that many of our churches have failed to make this teaching a cardinal aspect of water baptism. Not to cast aspersions on sprinkling, but if, as the Reformers said, baptism is a sermon and a prayer in water,³⁸ then immersion speaks volumes. Immersion makes sense, perhaps for reasons of pedagogy as much as efficacy. Belief in infant baptism is not in itself reason to reject immersion for in Orthodox churches they have been baptizing babies through triple immersion for centuries.³⁹

Baptism thus educates about the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: being joined to Jesus, we become like him. This process of divinization—the continual receiving of the Spirit who proceeds from the Father through the Son—warrants more educational attention, especially in light of contemporary attempts to replicate the concept in human terms. I speak of the idea of "humanization." To be fully human, as humanity is displayed in Jesus, is to become like God.

If a Trinitarian theology puts evangelicals in helpful conversation with post-modern notions of

relationality, then a Spirit Christology is one way they can be in deeper sympathy with liberationist and feminist concerns to see humanity healed and made whole. In Paulo Freire's influential *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, his opening sentence states: "While the problem of *humanization* has always, from an axiological point of view, been man's central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern."⁴⁰ This concern stems from the rising incidence or awareness of "dehumanization." Perhaps "humanization" is, in a word, the overriding concern of most liberationist and feminist discourse. Freire says that humanization is "man's historical vocation," and he notes: "The pursuit of full humanity, however, cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity..."⁴¹ This is the point precisely, though its meaning is greatly amplified in light of Jesus Christ.

A secular view of humanization may entail cultivating positive equal regard for fellow apelike creatures; given the world's grievous injustices, the world could do worse than to aim for that. But is it still setting sights too low if God has predestined us to be adopted as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ?⁴² The vocation of humanization and divinization are thus related. We may agree with Freire that this vocation can only be carried out in fellowship, and thus we rightly direct our attention to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

New Creation Ecclesiology

The love of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ bring us into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. To have the Spirit's fellowship is to participate in God's activity to redeem creation. Here we may speak of a "new creation" ecclesiology. The church, as God's new creation, is constituted and convened by the Spirit. Baptism teaches about creation; it speaks of *how* God creates—by his Word and Spirit. The Holy Spirit hovers over the water, with vibrant flutterings like the wings of a bird, over the waters of the deep in the first creation, over the waters of the Jordan in the new creation, and then too with flickering tongues as of fire at Pentecost. If there is baptism of water and fire, there is also in some sense a baptism of wind that sweeps into the upper room, and even a baptism of earth that Jesus undergoes in the tomb. The four ancient elements are all involved. Baptism

is elemental—a continual plunging into creation in order to emerge as emblems of new creation.

Most vitally, therefore, we need to see and teach how baptism is an ongoing activity. The focus then is not solely upon baptism as a water ritual, or even upon baptism in the Holy Spirit as an isolated event. A word about the latter is in order. Reasoning from Scripture, especially passages in Acts, Pentecostals have taught that Spirit baptism and water baptism are separate events, though they may sometimes coincide.

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Most Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians have said that Spirit baptism and water baptism are conjoined, and support their case by pointing to the example of Jesus' baptism and other Scriptures. Karl Barth for his part makes a clear theoretical distinction between Spirit baptism and water baptism; the two are different yet united in a pattern resembling the Chalcedonian description of Christ's two natures: Spirit baptism is the divine activity, water baptism the human response.

These discussions of water and Spirit quickly become complex, but it is not necessary to reach complete agreement on questions Pentecostals have helpfully raised before undertaking baptismal education. We have said that water baptism is not complete unless and until there is baptism of the Holy Spirit, for therein (as the apostles were told) resides power to live the new life—power to be the Christian one has become, and to become the Christian that one has been made. This much at least seems clear from the example of Jesus: that water and Spirit baptism imply each other. As for how they connect, and what constitutes the initial manifestation of Spirit baptism, and what part of the activity belongs

to God, what part to humanity—these are questions that warrant further discussion. But the teacher need not resolve all these questions perfectly before offering valuable education about the meaning of baptism and its dynamic movement.

Here is the essential thrust of that movement: by entering faithfully and obediently into creation—into the water, the wind, even the fire and earth—we simultaneously enter into the life of God; and in being plunged into the life of God we are in turn more fully thrust back into the world, with power to do good and heal all those who are under the power of the devil. That is perhaps the human-centered way of putting it. From our understanding of the divine perspective, God is drawing us out of the world through sanctified elements of creation, so that he can send us back into the world as the first-fruits of his new creation.

The church fellowship is dynamic—set in baptismal motion by the Holy Spirit. The church is both holy and apostolic: the called out ones are also the sent out ones. Ordinary elements such as water, or perhaps water and oil, are made sacred. Matter becomes holy again, as God originally intended it to be. This sense of “holy materialism” is needed to counteract both the crass materialism that denies the spiritual, and various contemporary gnosticisms that deny the importance of the material. For God created the spiritual and material to be together.

The “new creation” concept of holy materialism also serves as a point of contact with the environmental concerns of many groups today. If environmentalists and eco-feminists are looking for ways to make nature sacred again, it could be in part because evangelicals and others have sometimes overlooked the ways that God is doing so, and the way God calls his new creation, the church, to exercise responsible stewardship in that process. Baptism educates that God is energetically active in nature, in the water, wind, fire, and earth; and it also declares that God is essentially above nature.

Finally, baptism is an appropriate moment to teach about death. The “new creation” ecclesiology implicit in baptism says that God is able to redeem all aspects of creation, even death. In one sense, death is the “last enemy to be destroyed.”⁴³ In the fully new creation there will be no more death.⁴⁴ But in the

meantime, death is still a part of this creation, even as the pattern of death-and-resurrection is central to baptism. Schmemmann describes how Christ does not immediately abolish death, because “he does not abolish this world of which physical death is not only a ‘part’ but the principle of life and even growth.”⁴⁵ Rather, Schmemmann goes on to say, Christ redeems death: “But He does infinitely more. By removing the sting of sin from death, by abolishing death as a spiritual reality, by filling it with Himself, with His love and life, He makes death—which was the very reality of separation and corruption of life—into a shining and joyful “passage”—passover—into fuller life, fuller communion, fuller love. ‘For to me to live is Christ,’ says St. Paul, ‘and to die is gain’ (Phil. 1:21).”⁴⁶

Death by water, so fearful to the ancients and to us, is now, through faith and in baptism, a graceful passage that betokens eternal life. Baptism is thus the quintessential paschal event of God’s new covenant with the church that is his new creation. This is the baptismal motion of the Christian life: through sanctified elements of creation, we are plunged into the Trinitarian life of God, and come up with power to live in a manner that becomes Christ.

Notes

¹ Mark 1:1.

² Acts 1:22.

³ Acts 10:38.

⁴ Kilian McDonnell, *The Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), p.77.

⁵ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III.9.3; translation from Robert M. Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), p.130.

⁶ McDonnell, p.117.

⁷ McDonnell, p.115; Tertullian writes that Jesus is called Christ because of his baptismal anointing with the Spirit; and in his homilies, Philonexus of Mabbug rather remarkably declares: “Jesus has been born anew by baptism.” McDonnell, p.207.

⁸ Acts 2:38.

⁹ Everett Ferguson, article in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (Second Edition, 1997).

¹⁰ Regarding the former, circumcision was required of all physical descendants of Abraham, but his first child to receive circumcision, Ishmael, was not an heir of the covenantal promise (according to Gal. 4:30 and Rom. 9:7). Regarding the latter, the prophets spoke of a day when God would deal with people more

as particular persons than as tribal or national units (e.g., Jer. 31:29f., Ezek. 18). The continuity of God's covenantal grace is kept in tension with the discontinuity of its administration—so the time of fulfillment differs from the time of promise.

¹¹ Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water And the Spirit* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), p.67.

¹² Joachim Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), p.56.

¹³ Kierkegaard, p.365.

¹⁴ Kierkegaard, p.372.

¹⁵ Kierkegaard, p.374.

¹⁶ Kierkegaard, p.371.

¹⁷ Karl Barth (1969) *Church Dogmatics*, IV, 4. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark., p.194.

¹⁸ Barth, p.xi.

¹⁹ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p.235.

²⁰ Moltmann, p.232.

²¹ Moltmann, p.232.

²² Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith: a comprehensive approach to religious education and pastoral ministry* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), p.336.

²³ Matthew 3:17; see also Mark 1:11, Luke 3:22.

²⁴ Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water And the Spirit* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), p.42.

²⁵ Matthew 28:19; see also 1 John 5:3 on the connection between commandments and love.

²⁶ McDonnell, p.47; both Ephrem and Jacob of Serugh say this.

²⁷ *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Fragments of the Commentary on Matthew and Luke 11; quoted in McDonnell, p.49.

²⁸ Colin Brown

²⁹ John 5:19; 8:28.

³⁰ John 14:12.

³¹ Matthew 3:15; Philippians 2:6-7.

³² see 2 Peter 1:1-4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17; 6:18; John 10:34.

³³ McDonnell, p.119.

³⁴ McDonnell, p.121.

³⁵ Luke 10:19; Ephesians 2:2.

³⁶ Romans 6:5.

³⁷ Romans 6:3.

³⁸ 1 Peter 3:21.

³⁹ Some priests today do not immerse an infant's entire head; more traditionally, the priest's hand is used to form an air pocket.

⁴⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), p.27.

⁴¹ Freire, p.73.

⁴² Ephesians 1:5.

⁴³ 1 Corinthians 15:26.

⁴⁴ Revelation 21:4.

⁴⁵ Schmemmann, p.64.

⁴⁶ Schmemmann, p.64.

The Other Side of the Story

by Ellen T. Charry

To speak of Christ and Judaism is a painful task, for it is impossible to do so without evoking centuries of mutual misunderstanding, violence, counter-violence, reciprocal hostility, fear, and contempt. For two millennia, Jews have said NO to Christ. While some said yes out of true faith in him, many others converted under threat of banishment, death, torture, or coerced baptism. It has been commonplace for Christians to attribute the Jewish NO to Christ to Jewish disobedience to God, pride, misreading of scripture, corruption, arrogance, perhaps even stupidity. This gives us but one side of the story, however, and every story has two sides. Of course, Jews viewed Christians similarly, based on their theology and their treatment of Jews, but they rarely had the power to act on these feelings. Sporadic outbursts of spontaneous rage and contempt had to suffice. Moreover, since the Christians held all the power, such outbursts of resentment and revenge often eventuated in further suffering for Jews.

The Jewish NO to Christ

The Jewish NO to Christ is far deeper and more serious than the understandable suspicion and contempt of people who speak of the love of God, yet defame and abuse Jews. It is even deeper than the judgment Jews made that Jesus was not the messiah they awaited. The strictly theological issues at stake pivot around the very identity of Judaism itself. Christians have rarely been able to abide or even see Jewish theology, and so the Jews gave up trying to explain themselves and retreated into self-protection.

Without the claims to christhood (messiahship) or divine sonship, Jesus would have posed no threat to Judaism. Two claims led to the judgment that Jesus, untrained, unordained, and unauthorized by the rabbis, was a blasphemer. One was the claim that God

sent him to transform the people of God. To them, he appeared to be self-appointed. The other was Paul's claim that in his person he brought about a new relationship to God for Jews and gentiles. This eventually led to the conclusion that Christianity was a different religion, at best a Jewish heresy. The claims by and about Jesus challenged the very core of Jewish faithfulness to God, and most Jews could not abide them without betraying scripture, the law, God's promises, and finally the very being of God. Thus it remains until this very day. It is impossible for Jews to take Christian claims seriously unless they are prepared to compromise the very foundation of their faith, their scriptures, their identity, and their way of life. In short, Christ asks Jews to cease being themselves and become someone else on the say-so of renegade Jews.

An essential issue in the debate is the Christian claim that with Christ God is present in the world in a way that makes possible unprecedented intimacy with God. Yet, Israel had never experienced the unbridgeable alienation from God that Christianity presumes. Israel had known of and relied upon God's presence since the Exodus from Egypt. Beginning with the pillars of fire and cloud that enabled Israel to escape the Egyptian pursuers and that protected Israel in the desert for so long, Israel was sure of God's immediate presence. With the giving of the law, God commanded the people to build a tabernacle that would carry the Ark of the Covenant. In this move, God came down from "his" holy mountain and began to travel with Israel wherever Israel went, providing guidance, protection, and strength. How central this presence was

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to Israel became evident when the Philistines in battle against David captured the ark. Their goal, apparently, was to rob Israel of Israel's safety, security, and power, the way Delilah sheared Samson. The plan backfired in both cases. God wrought havoc on the Philistines for their plunder and they had to return the ark to its rightful owners, vindicating God's special relationship to Israel. Eventually, Solomon builds God a massive Temple in Jerusalem to be "his" dwelling-place in Israel. God's move from the mountain-top, first into the desert, and then into the city, assured Israel of Israel's identity as "his" people as promised in Lev. 26:11-2: "And I will make my abode among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people."

The Psalms indicate the effect of this intimacy between God and Israel. The protagonists regularly long to live in God's house, enter "his" courts, dwell in "his" tent. They take refuge in and crave to taste and touch "his" word, "his" law. Their goal is to internalize God's law and presence in these forms that they may be strengthened. In this way, they can withstand the psychological and perhaps even the physical assaults of enemies, fears, and temptations. Here we see how submission to God protects and nourishes corporate Israel as well as individuals for their spiritual empowerment.

By Jesus' time, the desert wandering was long past, as was the Exile. It was the time of the Second Temple, a shadow of Solomon's original. Israel had returned to Jerusalem with fresh ways of understanding God's presence with Israel. In addition to the Temple cult, the law codes found in Exodus through Deuteronomy were being reinterpreted in the circumstance of Roman occupation, a time so radically different from the period the law codes depicted. Now the interpretations of the sages themselves held the authority of the word of God. Israel could thus ingest "Torah,"—now meaning the growing body of legal and pastoral interpretation of scripture as well as scripture itself—so that Israel could taste and see the presence of God and live obediently.

Jews were delicately poised against their military conquerors, struggling to keep tempers cool until God would rescue them from this latest oppressor. Into this tenuous situation, came Jesus, slashing and burning

the religious and social landscape, accompanied by a befuddled band of followers. Religious life, family life, commerce, and social life were torn limb from limb under his fiery gaze. Little of Jewish faithfulness, honor, or practice escaped his criticism. For most, his approach to Jewish tradition and leadership were insult-

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ing beyond bearing. This made him politically dangerous, for the Romans would not tolerate internal religious conflict that threatened violence within a conquered nation. It made it difficult for Jews to love him more than fleetingly.

Before the Exile, Jews believed that God forgave sins through the sacrificial cult. By Jesus' time, the synagogue was well established in the land of Israel and the lands of the Diaspora. It was through the synagogue that prayer, alms, and repentance became the de facto replacement for the sacrificial cult. Yet, on his own authority Jesus criticized and tried to alter nearly every Jewish belief and practice while claiming to be God's anointed. The Pauline and Johannine intimation that he was God incarnate, made his seemingly arrogant challenges to the Jewish way of life utterly insulting. God's becoming a person was unfathomable. One would have to go back to Abraham's meeting the three men at Mamre to come anywhere close to this idea. Jews knew that God loved them, cared for them, and was present with them in their suffering as in their sinning. But that Jesus had an exclusive relationship to God, yet had not come to liberate them from their enemies but to embrace their enemies was inadmissible. Jesus fomented his own death.

What was at stake theologically in this cataclysmic upheaval among the Jews? One set of issues revolved around Jesus' identity as the Christ. He seemed to them a shrill self-appointed prophet preaching a message of insult and injury. He (and Paul following him) proclaimed an idiosyncratic interpretation of scripture, which Jews eventually concluded was distorted. Beyond that, claims about Jesus were expanded to suggest that he was the Son of God in a way that other Jews were not. Fourth century theologians expanded this to suggest that Christ was of one being with the Father. Trinitarianism compromised Israel's monotheism in a way that was too close to polytheism for Jews to accept.

Another set of issues revolved around Jesus' teachings. They overturned the authority structure that enabled Israel to maintain Israel's identity and its trust in God in the midst of foreign domination and the transition from a nomadic to a settled agricultural way of life.

A third issue turned on the redefinition of the people of God. Paul and Luke argue that God reached out through Christ to embrace Israel's enemies as

divisively demanded utter loyalty that disrupted family, social, and economic life across the board. He did not argue points of law with the other sages in the academies in order to arrive at consensus or majority rule, as was their custom. Rather, he disregarded the entire ordered process of the development of the law, unsettling the populace with his "field preaching," agitating large crowds and setting them against their leaders. Jesus was uncredentialed at a time when relations with Rome required that authorized leadership mediate between a restive populace and the occupiers.

That Christ is an offense to Jewish eyes, ears, and sensibilities is painful for Christians to hear and difficult for them to fathom. The Christian offering of love, peace, and justice, the character of Jesus as advocate of the poor, sick, and weak, the event of Christ crucified interpreted as God's atoning self-sacrifice for the sins of the world—all this was perceived as a scorpion rather than a blessing. This judgment was not only based on the ill repute of Christians or Christians so-called. To Jews, the world looks unredeemed, as their own fortunes have waxed and waned under Christian domination from century to century. Jesus might have been well meaning, even bold to try to redress some corruption in ancient Israel. Still, Jews feel no need for a mediator – an intercessor with God – because they do not understand themselves as fallen and sinful to the core, unable to stand before God or to keep his law. In short, Jews do not understand themselves to have the problems that Christ came to solve.

Further, they do not accept the Christian claim that Judaism has been superseded, liquidated with the coming of Christ. When Christians say that God does not hear the prayers of Jews because Judaism itself has been taken up into Christ, and therefore no longer has theological validity outside of him, Jews can only say bewilderedly, "That's your opinion."

Christians, of course, see the whole story through very different theological lenses. From their vantage point, Jews should be delighted and honored, not suspicious of the fact that God chose to save the world through one of their own, indeed, an untutored Jew. From a Christian position, Christ spells not the end of Judaism but its consummation in the sense of fulfillment. Yet, the distance between these two views (supersessionism and consummation) is very slender.

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members of Israel itself. In his own way, Matthew also redefined Israel along ethical lines rather than the election of corporate Israel. The redefinition of Israel undermined Israel's calling as a people set apart for God in the midst of Roman paganism and cruelty that they judged to be defiling.

Adding fuel to the fire, underneath the theological issues surely was Jesus' provocative style. He was angry and confrontational with Judaism's authorized leaders, and on occasion even simple Jews. He militantly and

The German word "Aufhebung" conveys the ambiguity of both the word "end" in the sense of purpose and the word consume in the sense of doing away with. Accomplishing the purpose of the thing entails its obliteration, as the acorn must die to give birth to the tree. Christ makes real the claim of Isaiah 2 that all nations shall stream to the house of the God of Jacob, against a seemingly narrow-minded tribal view that God is God of the Jews only and those who convert according to Jewish law. That Jews fail to welcome gentiles into the covenant looks stunningly rude to Christians of an evangelical spirit. Jews who deny that the

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wall of hostility between Jews and pagans has been breached in Christ seem inhospitable or even disobedient to God who promised that all the families of the earth shall be blessed through the descendants of Abraham. What then, is the nature of the community that arises from the blood of Christ: the true people of God, or the death of the people of God?

Of course, Christians are no more able to let go of their side of this struggle than are the Jews. Those who truly understand the threat Marcion posed to the Church realize that unless Christ is truly the one who enables gentiles to become affiliated with the God of Israel, Christians are total nobodies in the divine economy. There is only one God, all other claimants being false pretenders. On both sides of the argument, self-definition is at stake.

The fact that Christians traded the law in for faith in Christ is another point of contention and dismay for Jews. The law is God's gracious gift. It structures

life and inhibits sin. Christian fear and hostility toward the Law dismays them. For Jews, the Law does not pave the way to hell but to intimacy with God. On the Christian side, Jewish fondness for the Law and trust in one's ability to keep it is the height of arrogance.

In short, Jews do not believe that their divine calling is fulfilled in Christ, but rather that Christ negates it. They are perplexed at the Christian failure to understand their demurral of Christ. For their part, Christians are perplexed at the Jewish suspicion of Christ, when he fulfills their calling as God's people. In essence, Jews do not understand why Christians do not understand their NO to Christ, while Christians would compromise themselves if they accepted the Jewish NO. Theologically speaking, Jews and Christians often speak past one another, so for the sake of mutual respect, Jews and Christian often abstain from theological discourse with one another.

The Contemporary Scene

The past fifty years have witnessed a revolution in Jewish-Christian relations. The World Council of Churches and Roman Catholic Church made official efforts to repudiate Christian anti-Semitism and the teaching of contempt for Judaism. Protestant and Catholic scholars have been at work seeking ways to honor Judaism in the wake of the Holocaust, including the rewriting of liturgies, in some cases. Others have called for the cessation of proselytizing Jews, often with Jewish support. This has caused consternation among those who believe that the only honorable way to treat Jews is by proselytizing them, because it is cruel to keep the salvation of Christ from God's own people for whom God sent him.

The above impasse would seem to divide the Christian community on the question of the Jews. Yet, the efforts of good will over the past fifty years on the part of those Christians aroused by the Nazi atrocities made an impression. Recently, 170 liberal rabbis, scholars, and agency bureaucrats have begun talking about offering a "thoughtful Jewish response" to this outreach of friendship. In September 2000 they published an unprecedented and groundbreaking statement of Jewish respect for Christianity. It is worth reflecting on what they said.

The statement, written as a declaration, has eight articles. The first is the acknowledgement that Christians worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This is as repudiation of the Jewish suspicion that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity masks tritheism.

The second article acknowledges the authority of what the Christians call the Old Testament as the same scripture that Jews hold sacred. It is clear from the statement that, while they cannot agree with a Christological reading of their Tanakh, they respect the Christian right to interpret their scriptures. This is major step toward Christians, who have regularly excoriated the Jews for failing to read the OT with Christ as its center.

Article three says that it is theoretically possible that Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the land of Israel. This article clearly presup-

***This document is a major step
toward recognizing the validity
of Christianity, something that
Jews have rarely done,
because they rarely felt safe
enough to do so.***

poses that many Christians do not in fact recognize the Jewish claim upon the land of Israel. They are also perfectly aware of the Christian notion of the perennially wandering Jew, cast out of the land of Israel for rejecting Jesus. Yet they choose to set this history aside. They then address a contemporary Christian objection by recognizing the importance of justice for all who reside in a Jewish state. There is no hint here of recognizing a Palestinian state, however.

Article four turns to morality. They claim that the central moral principles of the Torah derive from the creation of human beings in the image of God and point to this as a shared belief with Christians in the inalienable sanctity and dignity of every human being, and to improving the quality of life for all humanity against "the immoralities and idolatries that harm and degrade us." This article shows the heavy

influence that the Enlightenment and the American experience have had on liberal Jewish communities, hoping that that same modern tradition will now enable Christians to see Jews in like manner, after centuries of degradation and indignity.

The fifth article, while acknowledging that without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and violence against Jews the Nazi Holocaust could never have happened, nevertheless declares that Nazism was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity. It offers gratitude for those Christians who aided Jews during the War, and urges Christians to continue repudiating the Christian teachings of contempt for Judaism and the Jewish people. Significantly, they do not blame those who have rejected the teaching of contempt for the sins of their ancestors. That is, they are ready to forgive those who repent.

Article six recognizes the irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians on the question of redemption. It asks Christians to respect the Jewish right to their faithfulness to the revelation of God as they understand it, and can do likewise for their Christian neighbors. This is not an invitation to theological conversation about Jesus Christ or Jewish and Christian interpretations of scripture. That awaits God's redemption of the entire world. The document calls for mutual respect. It does not open the way to theological discussion about theological issues that divide Christians and Jews.

Article seven urges Jews not to fear a new relationship with Christians because they think it might weaken Jewish life and the Jewish people. Here they tap into the deep fear among Jews since the days of Nehemiah that too much contact with gentiles will undermine Jewish identity.

The final article is a restatement of what has been the primary way Jews and Christians have taken to relating to one another outside theological interchange. The two communities have been and "must" work together for justice and peace.

This document is a major step toward recognizing the validity of Christianity, something that Jews have rarely done, because they rarely felt safe enough to do so. They have gone as far toward Christianity as they comfortably can within the limits of Jewish theological integrity. The last time a Jew took this a

step even further and fully validated Christianity was Franz Rosenzweig in his amazing book, *The Star of Redemption*. He wrote it in Germany in 1918-19. His dream of interfaith harmony exploded just a few years after he died in 1929. The Jews who penned this document truly believe that America is different, perhaps even that the world is now different.

All of this may leave Christians with things to ponder. Although few may see it, the Jews constitute the greatest challenge to Christianity. Perhaps on a subliminal level, that is why Christians have rarely let them rest. When I was in Mainz, I went to the great church in the center of the town. Around the corner, we went into the old synagogue, probably dating to Luther's day, down some crude stone steps, and into a crypt below street level. There were no furnishings beyond a few bare benches. When I returned to the sunlit street, I had to ask myself, why would an elephant need to step on an ant? The answer, I concluded was that in this case, the ant constitutes a threat to the elephant's very existence. Crushing it stilled self-doubt.

If the Jews truly are the chosen of God, if they truly worship the creator of heaven and earth, if they truly obey God's commandments, and sing "his" praises, there must always lurk in the back of Christian minds the question: why are we not in the synagogue? Although Judaism and Christianity each cause deep unease in the other, perhaps underneath, Christians are more threatened by Judaism than the reverse. That would account for the sleeping anti-Judaism in so much Christian preaching. The preacher often makes a mental distinction between Jesus' opponents in the New Testament and the preacher's Jewish neighbors. Yet, they are the same people.

If, on the other hand, the Jews stubbornly cling to a false religion that has been superceded by Christ, how are Christians to comport themselves in regard to these poor lost souls who should have ceased to exist two millennia ago? Jesus Christ himself stands at the center of the unfathomable mystery of salvation. Just as the God-human is a great paradox that proclaims God's relation to human life, so too, Jesus Christ is the great mystery that keeps these two great traditions linked together in a relationship that neither can finally ignore. Jesus Christ is the Jewish flesh through

which God joins gentiles to "himself." Gentiles are thus reminded regularly of their high calling at the Lord's Table. Judaism will always continue to nourish the body of Christ. Perhaps now, Christians can praise God for the gifts they received from the Jews.



Missing Factors in Jewish–Christian Dialogue

By Carl Kinbar

I am a Jewish believer in Jesus the Messiah. For twenty-seven years I have lived in this faith, meeting a great number of Christians, many of whom who love the Jewish people, and yet very few of whom have grasped Jewish sensibilities as well as Dr. Ellen T. Charry in her paper, “The Other Side of the Story.” It is very obvious to me as a Jew that Dr. Charry has had a serious encounter with “the other side of the story.” She has opened heart and mind to Jewish sensitivities and fears. She has made an authentic response to those sensitivities and fears.

Dr. Charry’s observation that the Jewish NO to Messiah is powerfully rooted both in Jewish self-identity and in perceptions of Messiah based on the distorted testimony of the Christian community is fundamental to the understanding of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Many other understandings woven through her paper are also essential to grasping why Jews and Christians often react to one another as they do. I will interact with these observations as I attempt to unfold a perspective that is almost always overlooked in Jewish-Christian dialogue, the perspective of Messianic Judaism.

The Judaism of Jesus’ Day

It is important to understand the appearance of Jesus and his followers within the matrix of Second Temple Judaism. The Judaism of Jesus time was diverse and factious. The Pharisaic party, the scholars and arbiters of the law, was in constant tension with the Sadducees, the priestly party involved in maintaining the Temple and the sacrificial system. The Essenes secreted themselves in the desert, sharply rejecting what they perceived as the worldly ways of both

Pharisee and Sadducee. There were the Zealots, fomenting rebellion against Roman occupation, as well as a “peace party” who counseled their fellow Jews to accommodate the Roman occupiers as much as possible. Also, various “prophets” would appear on the scene, calling the people to follow their apocalyptic vision. The overall situation was fluid and unstable. The upstart Galilean with his threatening influence on the people was a factor the “authorities” could do without.

Looking at this same situation from a religious perspective, there was no “one Judaism” in the first century. There were several competing Judaisms with profound differences, all claiming to represent God, all vying for the affections of the Jewish people.¹ From this perspective, too, Jesus’ prophetic challenge was an unwelcome addition to the mix. As Dr. Charry writes,

Religious life, family life, commerce, and social life were torn limb from limb under his fiery gaze. Little of Jewish faithfulness, honor, or practice escaped criticism. For most, his approach to Jewish tradition and leadership were insulting beyond bearing. This made him politically dangerous.²

Jesus’ challenge was seen as destabilizing—as challenges to authority always are. But, as we have seen, He was far from being the only destabilizing force, and his was not the only faction challenging the ascendancy of the Pharisees. It would be inaccurate to picture Him

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as an isolated force of unjustified social critique in Second Temple Judaism. What's more, Jesus stood in an established prophetic tradition, the record of which both Jews and Christians have preserved in our Scriptures.

Jesus as Heir of the Prophetic Tradition

"Israel had never experienced the unbridgeable alienation from God that Christianity presumes. Israel had known of and relied upon God's presence with 'her' since the Exodus from Egypt."³

Dr. Charry follows these sentences with a brief history of Israel's intimacy with God. But she has not taken note either of Israel's frequent rebellion against God or of God's confrontation of Israel through the prophets, the line of which Jesus was a part. This is a strange omission, since the prophetic critique of Israel's social, religious, and political sins was a major force during the very time that Israel "relied on God's presence."

Israel's sense of God's presence with her since the Exodus was indeed valid. God continued to speak to the Jewish people – and still does – thus constantly validating the relationship. But that relationship was far from untroubled. The covenant love of God for the Jewish people is expressed not only by acts of preservation and deliverance, but also by incisive critique of our sins delivered by the prophets.

Bring your worthless offerings no longer... I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me. I am weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you, Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood. (Is 1:13-15)

Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal, and walk after other gods that you have not known, then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered!'— that you may do all these abominations? (Jer 7:9-10)

Therefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because your lewdness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered through your harlotries with your lovers and with

all your detestable idols, and because of the blood of your sons which you gave to idols ... I shall bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy. I shall also give you into the hands of your lovers, and they will tear down your shrines, demolish your high places, strip you of your clothing, take away your jewels, and will leave you naked and bare. They will incite a crowd against you, and they will stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. And they will burn your houses with fire and execute judgments on you ... (Ezek 16:35-41)

One will not find any words of Jesus more scathing than these. His prophetic critique cannot justifiably be viewed as an aberration in Israel's history. Yet, Jesus and the prophets who preceded him spoke these words of grieving anger in the context of covenant bonds of love and commitment. The ongoing commitment of Jesus and his followers to the Jewish people found its ultimate expression in Paul's assertion that Israel will one day experience a national salvation.⁴

The claim that "Jesus criticized and tried to alter nearly every Jewish belief and practice while claiming to be God's anointed on his own authority."⁵ is true only in part. Like the prophets (who were also misunderstood as opposing Torah), Jesus exposed the sins of our people, yet fully affirmed Torah. With few exceptions, his teaching was consistent with the diverse Judaism of his day. The emphasis that Jesus placed on the Shema ("Hear, O Israel...) and on the love of God and neighbor (Mk 12:29-31) was fully in accordance not only with Scripture but also with Jewish tradition. He clearly advocated full obedience to the entire Torah:

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 5:17-19)

Pinchas Lapide, a Jewish scholar who does not believe that Jesus is the Messiah, wrote in his study on the Sermon on the Mount that, "In all rabbinic literature I

know of no more unequivocal, fiery acknowledgment of Israel's holy scripture than this."⁶

The Ascendancy of Rabbinic Judaism

The destruction of the Second Temple devastated the influence of the Sadducees. Their power had been based primarily on their performance of the priestly ritual that now ceased. The influence of the Zealots, along with similar groups who sought independence from Rome, was also sharply curtailed, though ever beneath the surface, eager to respond to perceived Roman provocation. The Essenes had faded away. This left only the Pharisees and the followers of Jesus on the religious scene.

Jacob Neusner, one of the foremost scholars of Judaism today, observes that after the destruction of the Second Temple "a number of elements of the religious-cultural structure of the period before 70 were put together in a new synthesis, the synthesis we now call rabbinic Judaism."⁷ This new synthesis, based on the older Pharisaic and scribal traditions, included a very strong emphasis on serving God through learning Torah rather than through sacrifice, and the extension of holiness rules, formerly applied only to priests, to all the Jewish people. In the process, elements of the older groups who resisted the new synthesis were suppressed or even excommunicated, like Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, the last of the great Pharisaic sages.⁸

Nevertheless, for several centuries after Jesus, there persisted a movement called the Nazarenes. Like the congregation at Jerusalem pictured in the early chapters of Acts, this movement held that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God while also adhering fully to Torah and Jewish tradition. Nazarene congregations understood themselves to be Jews who held certain beliefs in common with Christians. Nevertheless, the larger Jewish community – now consolidating under the new rabbinic synthesis – refused to accept them as genuinely Jewish and excluded them from the synagogue. For their part, the Christian community, responded to the Nazarenes' stubborn refusal to abandon the Torah by rejecting them as Christians. Both synagogue and church expressed their disapproval by persecution. Eventually, the Nazarenes were squeezed out of existence.⁹

The Contemporary Scene

In discussing the contemporary scene, Dr. Charry focuses on the "170 liberal rabbis, scholars, and agency

bureaucrats [who] have begun talking about offering a 'thoughtful Jewish response' to this outreach of friendship [by certain Christian groups]. In September 2000 they published an unprecedented and groundbreaking statement of Jewish respect for Christianity."¹⁰ This statement is *Dabru Emet* (Speak Truth), *A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity authored by the National Jewish Scholars Project*. It would be difficult to disagree with the spirit in which most of this statement is offered, as it affirms such vital basics as the belief of Jews and Christians in the same God, the same basic scripture (what Jews call the Tenach and Christians the Old Testament), and a common acceptance of the moral principles of Torah. However, the sixth statement requires closer examination. The last portion of this statement should be accepted enthusiastically by Jews and Christians:

"That difference [between the way Christians and Jews know and serve God] will not be settled by one community insisting that it has interpreted Scripture more accurately than the other; nor by exercising political power over the other. Jews can respect Christians' faithfulness to their revelation just as we expect Christians to respect our faithfulness to our revelation. Neither Jew nor Christian should be pressed into affirming the teaching of the other community."¹¹

Indeed, these differences can never really be settled by speaking past one another, without mutual respect, or by coercion. On the other hand, the first three sentences of this portion are problematic:

"The humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world as promised in Scripture. Christians know and serve God through Jesus Christ and the Christian tradition. Jews know and serve God through Torah and the Jewish tradition."¹²

The problem with this passage is that there are only two parties at the table – Jews and Christians, self-defined as mutually exclusive groups. From the perspective only of these two groups, the statement makes some sense. However, it turns out that there is another party, one who is not invited to the table, one whose very existence is a commentary on, and challenge to, the dialogue. That uninvited group is Messianic Judaism, a movement of over 200 synagogues in the

United States alone, congregations of Jews and like-minded Gentile believers worshipping together. Simply put, Messianic Judaism embraces Jesus as Messiah while also retaining adherence to Torah and Jewish tradition. The existence of this movement is the most crucial missing factor in the Jewish-Christian dialogue.

The Messianic movement is in large part seeking to walk in the footsteps of the Nazarenes. In an era when suffocating persecution is not practicable (at least in fully democratic States), it is once again possible to embrace both Jesus and Torah.

Although, according to Dr. Charry, "Christians traded the law in for faith in Christ", we have not. Like the rest of the Jewish community, we believe that the Torah is "God's gracious gift. It structures life and inhibits sin." Like the rest of the Jewish community, we "do not accept the Christian claim that Judaism has been superseded"¹³ with the coming of Messiah, who said, "I have not come to destroy...." Neither do we agree that this fulfillment did away with the theological validity of Judaism.

Why is Messianic Judaism not part of the Jewish-Christian dialogue? Because Messianic Judaism provokes among Jews some of the same fears that Christianity provokes, and among Christians arouses some of same fears that Judaism does. "On both sides of the argument, self-definition is at stake."¹⁴

When speaking of the reciprocal fears of Jews and Christians, Dr. Charry penetrates to a core issue as she elaborates on Christian fears: "If the Jews truly are the chosen of God, if they truly worship the creator of heaven and earth, if they truly obey God's commandments, and sing 'his' praises, there must always lurk in the back of Christian minds the question: why are we not in the synagogue?"¹⁵ I believe that Messianic Jews represent a similar challenge to Christians fears: "If there are Jewish and Gentile believers who worship God together, embracing both Jesus and the Torah, why are we not in the Messianic Jewish synagogue?"¹⁶

At the same time, Messianic Judaism is even more threatening to Judaism than Christianity is. It is relatively easy for most Jews to reject a Christianity that demands that they embrace Jesus but abandon Torah and Jewish tradition. However, Messianic Judaism will not let go of Torah and tradition *or* of Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. When we are at the table

the dichotomy of "Jesus or Torah" is exposed as false. The other parties at the table must either interact with our claims or walk away. The very existence of Messianic Judaism says that both the Jewish community and the Church erred long ago in defining themselves in opposition to one another. If we are taken seriously, then neither group can rest easy, their traditions unchallenged.

There is more. *Dabru Emet* speaks as if there is one Judaism, that "Jews know and serve God through Torah and the Jewish tradition." It ignores the huge number, as high as 50%, of Jews in America today that are detached from the Jewish community and its values,

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who have lost their connection to Torah and Jewish Tradition. It also ignores the vast diversity of the Jewish community itself, which ranges from Ultra-Orthodox Judaism on the right—Jews who adhere rigidly to the most minute aspects of Jewish Law—to Humanistic Judaism on the left, for whom atheism is a pre-condition of rabbinic ordination. Apart from the bare fact of its diversity, contemporary Judaism as a whole bears little resemblance either to the diverse Judaism of Jesus' time or to the enforced conformity of post-Second Temple Judaism. This diversity of the Jewish community—both in Jesus day and in ours—is another missing factor in the Jewish-Christian dialogue.

The 170 of the National Jewish Scholars Project come largely from the non-Orthodox segments of the diverse Jewish community. They represent movements within Judaism—primarily Conservative, Reform, and

Reconstructionist, the largely liberal portion of the Jewish community—who view Torah and the traditions of Judaism as a menu from which individuals can freely choose. Among their members, for example, only a minority keep the Sabbath. Interestingly, Jesus was vilified largely because He had a different understanding of the Sabbath and Paul was never even accused of breaking the Sabbath! Members of many contemporary Jewish movements are given freedom to decide such things as whether to keep the Sabbath, avoid non-kosher foods, and even whether or not to follow certain moral precepts of the Torah.

In his recent book, *Being Jewish*¹⁷, Ari Goldman writes,

“From all my years of observing Jews, I find one common thread: Jews are not consistent. Jews pick and choose from among the wide panoply of religious practices. In the words of the late Jacob Rader Marcus, the preeminent historian of American Jewry, who died in 1995 at the age of ninety-nine: ‘There are six million Jews in American and six million Judaisms.’” Goldman continues, “... we are Smorgasbord Jews.”¹⁸

In other words, for the vast majority of the Jewish community neither Torah nor Jewish tradition are considered binding as a whole. Nor is it forbidden to blend Judaism with non-Jewish practices and beliefs. Today there are fully accepted Jews who “practice zen meditation, chant Buddhist mantras, and sing Hindu hymns. Yet they are Jews.”¹⁹ Many in the Jewish community today view Torah as largely, or even entirely, a man-made document. Even “Jews wishing to maintain their Judaism in a non-theistic manner” are accepted by the liberal Jewish community.²⁰

There is no longer one Jewish way of looking at things. From the perspective of diversity alone—diversity of theology and/or practice—it is difficult to understand why Messianic Judaism is not embraced as a legitimate, even vital part of the Jewish community.

Two recent books examine this issue of Messianic Jewish inclusion in the Jewish community – *Messianic Judaism*²¹ by Rabbi Carol Harris-Shapiro (1999) and *Messianic Judaism*²² by Rabbi Dan Cohn-Sherbok (2000).

Carol Harris-Shapiro is a Reconstructionist rabbi. Most of her book is a sociological study of a particular

Messianic congregation in which she was a participant-observer. She frequently notes how, in her view, the form of Jewish symbol, ritual, and celebration are filled with Christian meaning, thus “betraying” their original intent.²³ As a Messianic Jew, I accept this criticism – to a degree. We are a young and developing movement. The first Messianic congregations were founded in the 1960’s. Many of our congregations are yet to grow beyond baby steps.

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However, if Harris-Shapiro had studied a broader range of Messianic congregations more deeply, she would have found a different story. There is great diversity in the Messianic movement, and we are increasingly steeped in the meanings and perspectives of Judaism that have so long been denied to us. Serious theological and practical work is taking place to integrate our beliefs into a coherent, but essentially Jewish, world-view.

Next, Harris-Shapiro examines the legitimacy of Messianic Judaism (as she sees it) in light of the great diversity of the Jewish community. She acknowledges how far humanistic Judaism and Jewish Hindus and Buddhists are from other forms of Judaism. Yet she places Messianic Judaism in a separate category, characterizing the Messianic Jew as “one who sounds and behaves like a Jew,” but is in reality “an evangelical Christian beneath.”²⁴ Thus, a Jew who become Messianic commits a betrayal of fundamental Jewish values.

Unfortunately, Harris-Shapiro’s conclusions are based neither on broad exposure to Messianic Judaism

nor on that movement's self-definition and self-perception. Harris-Shapiro has identified this movement with those "Christians" who have been guilty of religious imperialism. To her, Messianic Jews are not truly interested in Judaism – their real goal is to snatch Jewish souls.²⁵ While this may be true of some individuals in Messianic congregations, this characterization of the whole movement is a blatant stereotype. This technique is only too familiar, used by religious and other authorities throughout the ages. The purveyors of the prevailing culture—those who hold power—stereotype and marginalize the dissident, thus guarding themselves against the dissident's critique of that culture.

The offering by Rabbi Daniel Cohn-Sherbok is much more encouraging. Rabbi Cohn-Sherbok is a Reform rabbi from England. He has a wide knowledge of the Jewish world. He is a widely-published author on Jewish subjects. Cohn-Sherbok has seen the same things that Harris-Shapiro points out in Messianic Judaism, but he has also seen far more. After a serious investigation of Messianic Judaism, having visited conferences and congregations and familiarized himself with our history and literature, he comes to conclusions that differ vastly from Harris-Shapiro's. Cohn-Sherbok looks into every area of Messianic Jewish life and practice—the Sabbath, Passover, and other festivals, life cycle events such as circumcision, Bar and Bat Mitzvah (coming of age for young men and women) and marriage, as well as liturgy and personal and congregational ritual. In all of these realms he sees Messianic Jewish practice as consistent with the practice of the diverse Jewish community.

Cohn-Sherbok is in disagreement with Messianic Judaism on a number of significant issues. He is not a Messianic Jew. He is also fully aware of Harris-Shapiro's critique of Messianic Judaism.²⁶ Nevertheless, he sees the movement as authentically Jewish when considered against the backdrop of contemporary Judaism. He examines, in turn, the departures made by Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Humanistic Judaism from beliefs once considered as essential to Judaism, and draws the conclusion that there is simply no consensus among non-Orthodox Jews concerning the central tenets of the faith, neither is there any

agreement about Jewish observance."²⁷ Cohn-Sherbok suggests a pluralistic model of Judaism. "Given the multi-dimensional character of modern Jewish life, Messianic Judaism should be regarded as one among many interpretations of the Jewish faith."

²⁸ In light of the diversity of those considered legitimate in the Jewish community – including those who have totally abandoned belief in God – it is "absurd to exclude the Messianic movement from the Jewish community",²⁹ especially because, "as we have seen, Messianic Jews are more theistically oriented and more Torah-observant even than their counterparts within the Conservative and Reform movements."³⁰

Finally, Cohn-Sherbok knows that "it will not be easy for the Jewish community to come face to face with itself and to recognize that Messianic Judaism is no more inauthentic than other forms of contemporary Jewish life."³¹ Indeed, the inclusion of Messianic Judaism "can evoke from the Jewish community a greater awareness of the need for acceptance and tolerance in the modern age."³²

In light of these observations, is it really true, as Dr. Charry suggests, that "It is impossible for Jews to take Christian claims seriously unless they are prepared to compromise the very foundation of their faith, their scriptures, their identity, and their way of life"?³³ It is certainly true that the church has long presented belief in Jesus as an alternative to Judaism. However, it is not Jesus but Christians who are "asking Jews to cease being themselves."³⁴ This demand, along with bloody persecution, has bred in the Jewish community an almost visceral reaction to witness about Jesus as the Messiah. This sort of witness does not reflect either Biblical truth or the validity of Messianic Judaism. As Cohn-Sherbok has observed, the Messianic movement is "a home for those... who seek to integrate Jewish living with belief in Jesus."³⁵

Jewish-Christian Dialogue

The 170 contributors make it very clear that *Dabru Emet* "is not an invitation to theological conversation about Jesus Christ or Jewish and Christian interpretations of scripture... The document calls for mutual respect. It does not open the way to theological discussion about theological issues that divide Christians and Jews."³⁶ Are we to believe that mutual respect and

dialogue on sensitive issues are mutually exclusive? Are we Jews and Christians to remain permanently unhealed and immature, unable to engage in such a dialogue within a framework of genuine mutual sensitivity and honor?

This is the Trojan horse of *Dabru Emet*. In a democratic State where anything and everything is on the table for discussion, why this call for silence, embraced by so many Christians and Jews? Again, I believe that the root of the matter is that, as Dr. Charry states, “On both sides of the argument, self-definition is at stake.”³⁷ This is also why Messianic believers are not invited to the table. Our very presence declares that this forbidden dialogue is not dead and will not die. Our very presence challenges both Jew and Christian to take another look at their presuppositions.

It is asserted in *Dabru Emet* that Christians and Jews should not dialogue about “theological issues that divide” them. This sets up an immediate tension for Christians who believe that Jesus, the Messiah of the

Jewish community. These Jews are much less likely to be offended by open dialogue with Christians, assuming it is conducted with sensitivity and integrity – and with unaffected listening to the other as a human being possessing equal value and uniqueness. It is certainly the privilege and responsibility of the church to dialogue in this way.

More is required when relating with the Jewish community, Jews who are deeply attached to one another, to Jewish institutions, and to Jewish tradition. In this environment, the factors highlighted by Dr. Charry assume a much greater significance. Confrontational demeanor and strident language is never appropriate. Nevertheless, dialogue is certainly possible in an atmosphere of genuine mutual respect. To remain silent about crucial issues of life may protect the fears of church and synagogue. But the price is too high – what shields our fears also hinders us from fully encountering the riches of one another’s heritage. As Dr. Charry writes, Messiah Jesus “is the great mystery that keeps these two great traditions linked together in a relationship that neither can finally ignore.” Christians and Jews have much to learn from one other.

Only an artificially truncated dialogue between committed Jews and Christians would be devoid of witness. In fact, authentic Jewish–Christian dialogue *must* contain elements of witness from *both* sides. Even as Christian witness focuses on the uniqueness of Jesus as Messiah, Jewish witness focuses on the uniqueness of Torah and Jewish tradition. How suitable it would be to have Messianic Judaism at the table—a movement that shares in the uniqueness of both parties.

In addition to being potential participants in Jewish–Christian dialogue, Messianic believers and congregations have another calling. We are *not* a mission to the Jewish people. Our unique calling as a movement—as congregations, families, and individuals—is to live in the context of the Jewish community, participating in Jewish institutions, Jewish study, and Jewish worship.

Even as I am a Kinbar, part of an extended family, I am also a Jew, part of the Jewish community. As a family, we enjoy our times together. We get together simply because we are family. At times, we talk about spiritual matters, about deep issues of life. In this context, I occasionally bear witness. However, regardless

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Jewish people, suffered and died so that “all [whether Jew and Gentile] who believe in Him would not perish but have eternal life.” The tension increases when Christians of good will become sensitized to “the other side of the story,” and begin to understand the intense pain that this subject gives to so many Jews.

Nevertheless, there is also that large number of Jews who are not strongly attached to Judaism or to the

of whether or not members of my family ever embrace Jesus as Messiah, they will always be my family.

Even so, the Messianic movement is located within the broader Jewish community. That community is our family. Hopefully, we will come to enjoy our times together. This is happening in modest ways even now. Hopefully, we will feel free to discuss the deep issues of life and truly hear one another. This, too, is beginning to happen (as Cohn-Sherbok's book exemplifies). We want to learn, and we hope that our fellow Jews will receive Jesus as Messiah. However, even if they do not – even if not a single fellow Jew embraces Jesus as Messiah – we will always remain a part of the Jewish community.

Notes

1 Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1991), pp. 131-133

2 Dr. Ellen Charry, "The Other Side of the Story"

3 *ibid.*

4 Mt 15:24 and 24:37-39; Lk 1:15-17 and 72-75; Jn 4:22; Rom 11:25-29

5 Charry

6 Pinchas Lapide, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), p. 14

7 Jacob Neusner, "Introduction," in Jacob Neusner, ed., *Understanding Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1974), p. 12

8 Eliezar Berkovitz, *Not in Heaven: The Nature and Function of Halakha* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1983), p. 49

9 Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), pp. 9-109 summarize the history of the Nazarene movement

10 Charry

11 Charry summarizes parts of the document. This quote is taken from the text of *Dabru Emet*, available on the website of The Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies at <http://www.icjs.org/what/njsp/dabruemet.html>

12 *ibid.*

13 These three quotes are from Charry

14 *ibid.*

15 *ibid.*

16 Here I am paralleling Dr. Charry's thought. This is not intended as an assertion that the church should be absorbed in the Messianic synagogue

17 Ari Goldman, *Being Jewish* (New York: Simon and Schuster,

2000)

18 *ibid.*, p. 27

19 Julius Lester, *Becoming a Jew* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1988) quoted in Anita Diamant, *Choosing a Jewish Life* (New York: Shocken Books, 1997), p. 17

20 Information on Humanistic Judaism can be found on the Humanistic Judaism Homepage at <http://www.teleport.com/~hellman>

21 Carol Harris-Shapiro, *Messianic Judaism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999)

22 Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism* (London and New York: Cassell, 2000)

23 Harris Shapiro, pp. 136-165 *inter alia*

24 *ibid.*, p. 177

25 *ibid.*

26 *ibid.*, p. 209 - 213

27 *ibid.*, p. 208

28 *ibid.*

29 *ibid.*, p. 210

30 *ibid.*, p. 212

31 *ibid.*, p. 213

32 *ibid.*

33 Charry

34. *ibid.*

35 Cohn-Sherbock, p. xii

36 *Dabru Emet*

37 Charry

Response to Carl Kinbar

by Ellen T. Charry

I welcome Mr. Kinbar's interest in "The Other Side of the Story." He has thought a good bit about these issues, and understandably wants to be included in the conversation, especially with the spread of a revived form of Jewish Christianity. Before turning to his main concern (not directly related to my essay), I will respond to the specific points he raised in response to my work.

Mr. Kinbar suggests that I have overlooked Israel's rebellion against God and the prophetic critique of Israel that runs constantly through the scripture to which Jesus was heir. This slightly misunderstands the point I was making. I wrote, "Israel never experienced the unbridgeable alienation from God that Christianity presumes." This does not discount biblical Israel's rebellions or prophetic criticism. Nor does it discount the falling away from God that typifies much current Jewish expression. Rather, this points to a theological, not an historical issue. Israel has no doctrine of the fall that translates into a doctrine of original sin or a doctrine of total depravity, against which people are helpless before God. The prophetic denunciations of Israel are to spur repentance and change. They do not lead to a theological anthropology that characterizes human nature as basically incapacitated, no matter how scathing or rightly deserved the denunciations of the prophets may be.

Mr. Kinbar misses the deeper theological issues at stake in his next criticism as well. My article points out that the religion attributed to Jesus by the Gospels overturns "nearly every Jewish belief and practice." To quote Matthew 5 in response does not get around this reality. Matthean Judaism believes that these Jewish Christians are upholding scripture, and believe that they are upholding the commandments: of this there is no doubt. Yet in fact, the hermeneutic applied to scripture is so different from pharisaic and eventually rabbinic

interpretation that not a doctrine or a practice was left in place: Matthew and Luke explode the doctrine of election; Paul and John reinterpret Jewish holidays and practices until they no longer exist in recognizable form; the incipient Christology of the New Testament already undoes the Jewish doctrine of God; Paul decisively undermines obedience to the law in favor of gentiles; and so on.

But there are mere details. Mr. Kinbar's real interest in responding to my essay is to plead for Messianic Jews' inclusion in the conversation. Why may they not also sit at this table? There are basically

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two reasons why Messianic Jews are not part of this painful and protracted theological discussion between Jews and Christians, even though they have been around since the 1960s.

One reason is simply that Messianic Jews have only been around since the 1960s. Forty years is not a lot of experience when the weight of 2000 years of theological history is at stake. Without precedent (beyond a few failed attempts described in Christian scripture) Messianic Jews have pretty much had to make their own way, more or less gleaned beliefs and practices as they could from wherever they could, putting it together as they go. To those who

believe that the integrity of ancient traditions is at stake, Messianic Jews look wet behind the ears.

The other reason Messianic Jews have to fight for legitimacy is perhaps more painful to bear. By Mr. Kinbar's own account, he is trying to resuscitate the Nazarenes of old. Yet both the synagogue and the church rejected their attempt to retain Christians within the scope of the synagogue. John's gospel testifies to this decision on the Jewish side. Pauline Christianity attests to this decision on the Christian side. In the intervening millennia neither side has changed its mind. It is not only impossible to put the two traditions in some kind of synchronous relationship artificially. From a Jewish perspective, even if Jews were to accept Jesus as an awaited messiah—an idea that is not consonant with contemporary Jewish understanding—it could not be the Christian Christ of faith. Christians do not worship a Jewish messiah—they worship the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God Incarnate. If Messianic Jews worship Jesus, the Messiah of the Jews, they are not finally Christians. Jews for their part cannot worship the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God, for from a Jewish theological standpoint, this would be to cease to worship God.

Mr. Kinbar seems unaware of the serious theological issues that separate Judaism from Christianity, issues that cannot simply be jumped over by appeal to scripture or a longing to be both Jewish and Christian at the same time. It is finally at the theological level that the Jewish-Christian struggle must be understood. Failing this, one risks creating a theologically incoherent or worse, duplicitous *tertium quid* that has neither Jewish nor Christian theological integrity no matter how sincere its adherents may be.



Sermon

Evangelism

*Delivered on June 13, 1999 at Central
Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, Maryland by
Dr. Ronald W. Scates.*

Sermon Text: 1 Peter 3:13-17

Everybody is all for evangelism, right? When you all took that worship survey last year requesting sermons, one of the biggest requests was for a sermon on evangelism. So this morning, you are going to get that.

In the Presbyterian Church USA, every time we do an evaluation of what our top priorities are, evangelism is always right up there at the top. Everybody is all for evangelism, right? Or are they?

Evangelism literally means good news, the sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ: his life, death, and resurrection and the possibility of His presence in one's life and the hope of eternal life with God—good news! Well if that is the case, then why is the word evangelism such bad news for many people?

For a lot of non-Christians the word evangelism stirs up thoughts of high-pressure, buttonholing, judgment, condemnation, and put downs—hucksterism. And I know how they feel.

I remember one time in San Antonio I was sitting in a restaurant, and this guy comes up and pulls up a chair next to me and asks me if I know Jesus Christ. He is going to witness to me. So to save him and me time, I said, "Hey, I *am* a Christian." And to make sure he understood, I said, "In fact, I'm born again, washed in the blood, and spirit-filled."

Well, the guy got kind of a disappointed smile on his face. He was about to leave, when I blew it by going on and saying, "In fact, I'm a Presbyterian pastor." With that, he sat back down and began to witness to me. Finally, to get rid of him, I prayed the prayer to receive Christ.

Evangelism is sometimes bad news for a lot of Christians as well. We don't want to come across as offensive. We don't want to lay our trip on people. We don't want to be identified with Jim and Tammy. We don't want to appear to be ramming anything down somebody's throat. We are all for evangelism, but we do a lot more talking about it than actually doing it and when we don't do it, unbelievers are happy. So, what is the problem?

Well, when we don't share the gospel with others, God is not real happy about it, and, in fact, Christians aren't real happy about it, either. They feel guilty inside because they know they never talk to anybody about Christ.

Even unbelievers aren't happy—like the two Michigan loggers in a logging camp. One remarked to the other, "You know, I'm just now finding out that you're a Christian. We've been working together for two years, and I had no idea. You know, that evangelist came through the camp last winter and talked to me about my soul. I pointed to you and said, 'Well you know, he seems to be doing fine without Jesus Christ. I don't think I need him either.'" At that point, the Christian who had been silent realized that his silence had put another person's soul in jeopardy.

We kind of know that deep down inside, too. Deep inside, we know that God wants us to do evangelism. Well, I've got some good news for you. You don't have

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to buttonhole people. You don't have to beat them over the head with a Bible. You don't have to lay your trip on anyone. That's why I am so excited about the text we are about to look at this morning.

I would invite you to turn with me, and keep your Bibles open during the sermon, to Peter's first letter, the 3rd chapter. Let's take a look at verses 13-17. This is the Word of God, and it is good news:

¹³Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened."¹⁵But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

Scott Peck begins his book *The Road Less Traveled* with this phrase: "life is difficult." You know it is. It is for everybody, Christian and non-Christian—but especially for the Christian today. Life is difficult if you try to follow Jesus Christ in an authentic way in a culture that is increasingly more and more post-Christian. And it was difficult back in the pre-Christian culture that Peter lived in, too.

As he writes to these early Christians, Peter is saying that if you try to follow Christ, if you try to do good, and if you are eager for doing good and try to live a life of authenticity and integrity and compassion in the name of Jesus Christ, then who is there to harm you? Well, there are plenty of folks!

So Peter goes on then in verse 14 to say, "Okay, Okay. But if you suffer, remember you are blessed."

Now you all remember what "blessed" literally means, don't you? It means "on the right road." When you suffer because you are following Jesus Christ, you are on the right road. And you don't need to be afraid because when you are on that right road, Jesus Christ is right there with you.

So, if you are going to follow Christ, you are going to suffer. If you go around saying that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation and eternal life, you are going to be attacked. If your lifestyle is one of Biblical

morality, then you are going to appear more and more odd as the years go on, and you are going to be mocked. If you make the claim that Christianity is the truth for the universe, then you are going to suffer for that. That is just the way it is.

The early Christians knew what that was all about. There is no way of getting around it. God is saying through Peter that it is through your suffering, your faithful suffering as a disciple of Christ, through your unwillingness to fudge, compromise or dumb-down the gospel, but by living transparently, naturally, compassionately and authentically as a Christian, God will redeem that. Even your suffering, God can make a context for evangelism. What Peter is saying here in this text before us is that if you live for Jesus Christ publicly, you are going to draw fire.

But here is what I don't want you to miss. He is also saying that you are also going to draw new believers to Christ. Who here would not like to experience and know first-hand, the unsurpassable joy of leading another person to a life-transforming eternally lifesaving relationship with Jesus Christ? You can have that experience.

But wait a minute, no you can't. No one can lead someone else to Christ. Did you know that? It is true—because only the Holy Spirit can lead someone to Christ. The Holy Spirit really is the only evangelist.

But, here's the good news. God loves you and me so much, that he doesn't do it all himself. He partners with us, including us in his great plan of salvation for people. The Holy Spirit chooses to work through and in your life and mine to lead other people to Christ.

He does that, I believe, chiefly when your life and mine lines up with the life that Peter lays out in verses 15 and 16 in the text. I believe we have in these verses the consummate evangelistic text of all of Scripture. It's God's ultimate plan for how Christians are to be about evangelism. Let's take a look at these two verses.

There are five points here I want you to notice—five things that when they line up in your life and mine, we are going to end up leading people to Christ.

Point number one is in verse 15: *Set apart Christ as Lord in your heart*. Now notice that Peter does not say, "Make Christ Lord of your life." Early in my ministry, I used to tell people that is what they needed to do—make Christ the Lord of your life. But I didn't need to

say that because Christ is already Lord of your life. Whether you're a Christian or not a Christian, whether you believe Jesus is real or not, Christ is Lord. You and I cannot *make* him anything that he already is.

That's why Peter says instead to set apart Christ as Lord in your heart. This a volitional thing. This is a voluntary thing. You and I are to **intentionally** recognize the Lordship of Christ in our lives, and then so order our lives in their entirety—our job, our family, our finances, our recreation, our relationships—order those things around and under the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the number one priority in our lives. In other words, our lives begin to revolve around him. That is what it means to set apart Christ as Lord of your life.

But let me come clean with you and confess. I don't always do that, even as a "Rev." Three things make me balk sometimes as setting apart Christ as Lord of my life.

First, I don't want to give up all of my stuff. Materialism has a hold on me and it does on all of us, and I sometimes find myself seeking after comfort and convenience rather than radical discipleship.

Second, I balk sometimes because I do not want to surrender control. I want to call all the shots in my life. I want to make all of the decisions. I want to be in charge. You know what I want to be when I grow up? God. That is what I want to be. I want to be in complete control of my life. I don't want to live by faith. I want to live by sight. I want to be in control making all of the decisions.

Third. I don't want to look weird. I want people to think of Ron Scates as respectably religious. But I don't want people thinking that I am some kind of wacked-out, weirdo, Jesus freak.

So, sometimes I balk at setting apart Christ as Lord of my life. But when I do set Him apart look at what happens. Let's go on to point number two.

When you set Christ apart as Lord of your heart, when you order your life around him, make him your number one priority, and put him at the center of your life, then point number two is: get ready, because people are going to come to you. Verse 15 says again that people are going to come.

You see, the world is out there watching Christians very closely. They are hoping to catch a glimpse of hope in our lives. They are watching you and me.

When they see authenticity—when they see Jesus Christ reflected in our lives—they will come to us, Peter is saying.

Now, they may come by night. They may tear us down in the morning, but they will come to us by night. Today's persecutors are tomorrow's believers. Because when they see something different in your life, it is something to laugh at in the morning, but when tough times hit they will come to you.

They will say things like, "I saw you get passed over unjustly for that job promotion, and you didn't go ballistic. You didn't seek revenge." Or they will come to you and say, "I have been watching you dying with terminal cancer, and I'm amazed at the way that you live. There's something different about you, tell me what it is."

Do you see what happens? You don't have to go out on an evangelistic crusade. If you set apart Christ as the Lord of your heart, you won't have to worry about whether you should be witnessing to so and so. You won't have to worry about laying your trip on someone. They'll come to you. They'll fling the door wide open to their life, and ask you into it. You're not laying your trip on them, *they're inviting you* to tell them about what it is that's at the center of your life.

Do you know what they're asking you? They're asking you to tell them about *Christ in you, the hope of glory*, (as Paul puts it in Colossians 1:27) although they don't know that is what they are asking. It gives you and me then the opportunity to share Christ with them. They're not going to say, "Oh, don't lay your religious trip on me," because they invited you. They asked. The door is wide open. They will come to you if you live authentically for Christ.

Point number three is in verse 15 once more: you'd better have something to say to them when they ask. You can't say, "Well, go talk to my pastor about that." They want to hear it from you. They don't want some canned speech, they want to hear it from your heart.

Can you this day sit down and, from your heart, articulate how your story intersects with Christ's story? If you can't, then you need to spend some time doing that—thinking about how the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his presence in your life, and his hope for eternal glory, impacts your day to day living. Then be able to share that story as confidently and naturally as if someone asked you about

your favorite baseball team or what you did on vacation last summer.

Point number four is still in verse 15. You are to share with people about Christ with gentleness and respect. You and I are not called by Christ to be Bible thumpers. We are not called to beat anybody over the head with the gospel. Peter is talking here about our attitude and the tone in which we speak and share with other people. He is saying that we need to share the gospel out of an attitude of respect and gentleness.

You and I are more likely to share the gospel in an attitude of respect and gentleness when we believe two things. First is when we are really convinced of the sovereignty of God—that it is really God and God alone who draws people to Christ. Second, we are more apt to share the gospel with respect and gentleness when we realize that Christ calls us to see every person we meet through the lens of the cross—as a special creation whom God has made, and whom God loves, and whom God has died for.

Take the story of Charlie's neighbor, for example. Charlie thought that he could argue his next-door neighbor into the kingdom. So, he was always debating him; and the next-door neighbor was always putting him down saying, "All Christians are brainless. They don't have any common sense. If people really had brains, they would never accept this myth of Jesus Christ."

That really got to Charlie, and so he began to devour the works of C.S. Lewis, Ravi Zacharias, and Josh McDowell — all excellent authors. Charlie thought, "I am going to win this intellectual battle."

Well, one day Charlie noticed that his next door neighbor's rain gutters were clogged with leaves. His neighbors' wife told him that her husband was afraid of heights, and so he couldn't clean them out. So, Charlie grabbed his ladder and went up there and cleaned out the man's rain gutters.

Imagine Charlie's surprise next Sunday, when his neighbor and his wife showed up in church. During that service of worship, Charlie's neighbor's eyes were opened, he heard the gospel, the veil was lifted, and he surrendered his life to Christ. Later, he went to Charlie and said, "The thing that drew me to church, and then eventually into the arms of Christ, was your spirit of servanthood and respect for me."

I really don't believe anybody gets argued into the kingdom of God, but by gentleness and respect.

Fifth, in verse 16, Peter says that you and I will do evangelism most faithfully and effectively when we have a clear conscience. How many times do we balk at sharing Jesus Christ with someone, even when they've asked us, "What is different in your life?" Often we've come up short because Satan is whispering into our other ear, "Who are *you* to be telling someone about Jesus Christ? If they only knew what you did last night. If they only knew what you said this morning. They would shake their heads and walk away."

So, we are to keep a clear conscience. How do we do that—by running around trying extra hard to be perfect and good? No. What *is* the church anyway but "Hypocrites Anonymous?"

You and I keep a clear conscience when we keep short accounts with God. When I sin in some way, what I do is push Jesus out of the center of my life and onto the periphery. Keeping a short account with God is simply realizing I have done that, and then as soon as I realize that, surrender myself once again to the Lordship of Christ: set him intentionally apart in my heart as Lord, and allow him his rightful place back in the center. God honors that.

You would be surprised how more articulately and how more eagerly you will be to share the gospel with someone when you are in right relationship with the One you are taking about. Keep a clear conscience.

Scott Peck is right. Life *is* difficult. There is no easy way to go through this life as a human being in a painless way. There is no easy, painless way to be a Christian. There is no painless, easy way to do evangelism, and yet, God in his providence has redeemed our pain and suffering, and actually transformed it into a winsome context for evangelism. It is when you and I suffer but have Christ at the center of our lives, that people will be drawn to us, and we have an opportunity to share.

If we are doing that, we don't have time to get involved in evangelism programs. We will be too busy answering the questions of those who come to us and ask, "What is the center of your life?"

Next week the Presbyterian Church, USA General Assembly meets in Fort Worth. Once again for the 33rd year in a row, we will be told that we have lost

something like 25,000 members over the past year. When you hear that statistic this year, I want you to remember something. It is not like that everywhere else in the world.

Five thousand people every month are coming to Jesus Christ through the Rural Presbyterian Church of India. A church largely made up of untouchables. That is the lowest rung on the Indian caste system ladder. Those are people, men and women, boys and girls, who daily suffer under the indignities and oppression of the caste system. Yet, they have set apart Christ as the Lord of their lives. They bear up under that suffering with joy and compassion to the extent that the other Indian castes around them see something different in their lives, and they are actually drawn to them. Five thousand people a month—all new believers—are coming into the kingdom through those untouchables. They see something different. They want to know what it is.

What about when people see your life and mine? Are they drawn to Christ? Why, or why not?



Reviews

The Smell of Sawdust: What Evangelicals Can Learn from Their Fundamentalist Heritage

by Richard J. Mouw,

Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000

*Reviewed By John G. Hartung,
Ph.D candidate in philosophy,
Syracuse University.*

The recent proposals by the Bush administration for supporting private charity work done by religious organizations with public funds have been characterized by some as requiring an objectionable return to the Antebellum era. The idea is that by such support, the government will be tacitly endorsing a return to the patriarchal and authoritarian structures of the 19th century. It is clear that we have made significant social progress from the conceptions of gender and social structure that encouraged abuse. Thus, a policy that fails to conserve these achievements is bad policy.

If this odium attaches to the social structures of the 19th century, how much more so does it attach to the religion of the era, as well as its contemporary expression in the form of Protestant fundamentalism? Yet American fundamentalism has been getting a second look from sociologists

and has been receiving a more positive appraisal than it has in the past. What impact has this case made on evangelicals?

The evangelical movement defines itself in part by dispelling any identification of itself with fundamentalism and has endeavored to show that a conservative and supernatural worldview need not be anti-intellectual or parochial. The evangelical view of fundamentalism is illustrated by the late evangelical apologist Edward J. Carnell's depiction of fundamentalism as "cultic orthodoxy."

However, much evidence brought forth by those outside and inside the evangelical movement strongly suggests that evangelicalism has been in denial about its relation to fundamentalism and that it has not really achieved escape velocity from its gravitational pull. Is it time for evangelicals to acknowledge this, come clean, and admit that they really belong with their fundamentalist forebears? How could evangelicalism reconnect with fundamentalism without compromising on its critique?

Richard Mouw, ethicist and current president of that evangelical landmark institution, Fuller Seminary in California, in his recent book, *The Smell of Sawdust*, takes a very personal and autobiographical approach to this

question. In his presentation, Mouw touches on the feelings of many in the evangelical movement with his own account of his experiences with fundamentalist preachers, camps, meetings, and hymns, all of which make for delightful reading. But underlying the nostalgia is a strategic and nuanced re-appropriation of fundamentalism by an evangelical leader. Mouw is sophisticated and possesses the credentials to represent the evangelical movement in this matter. Though Mouw admits that evangelicals owe a spiritual debt to fundamentalism, he tries to show that such a confession is by no means damning.

Mouw reconstructs an anecdotal counterpart to the case for evangelicalism's dependence on its fundamentalist past, showing how revivalist influences carry over into current evangelical activism and thought. He uses the image of the old tent revival practice of laying down a sawdust trail to lead the convicted sinner to the altar. The "smell of sawdust" still attaches to the various faces of evangelicalism.

Mouw looks at such things as "the battle for the Bible", aspirations for an evangelical intellectualism, dialogues with Jews and Catholics, personal religion and social structures, missions, and other issues, showing along the

way that evangelicals have benefited positively from their fundamentalist past while at the same time critically assessing it and altering it when it seemed necessary. As Mouw traces these trajectories, he usually winds up noting that they have taken evangelicals into difficult areas with no clear answers.

Often, when evangelicals balk at an issue, it is for reasons similar to fundamentalist ones. Each trail starts with the strength of a fundamentalist simplicity and ends in the morass of an evangelical complexity. Along the way, Mouw cites more detailed studies to confirm the picture he paints, showing that his view is not just a private perception.

The picture that results shows that fundamentalism is not without its excellencies and wisdom. In this, Mouw's book fits with much of his recent writing arguing that ordinary Christians should have a significant input in the theology of the church, not leaving the task to clergy and academics alone. This should give significant pause to a blanket condemnation of fundamentalism like we find in Carnell's remark. Yet, this picture also shows that evangelicalism is still struggling with the unfinished business of fully reconciling essential fundamentalist concerns and beliefs with life in contemporary culture.

Mouw is not afraid to cast himself as a person unsatisfactorily conflicted by the tensions that plague modern evangelicalism. But he leaves the question of whether such problems amount to incoherencies open. His argument assumes that these are issues but

not defeaters of evangelicalism.

It is relevant that, in Mouw's particular spin on evangelicalism, he more centrally identifies it with the Pietist movement rather than either the Reformation or the Puritan movement. This is striking since Mouw's theological tradition is characteristic for

having an extensive critique of the Pietist-Revivalist tradition. What made Pietism distinctive, of course, was its emphasis on lived Christianity and genuine transformation of life, rather than just an intellectual possession of Christian beliefs.

Evangelicalism reflects this in its identifying emphasis on conversion. Conversion is the basis for evangelical identity rather than any particular tradition of Protestantism. Conversion in evangelicalism is a deep spiritual and psychological change in which some basic theology enters as the necessary and sufficient cognitive component. Evangelicals are to be identified more by what they become rather than just what they believe.

With such an emphasis on personal transformation, could it be that the evangelical tradition is especially well placed to provide the resources for coherently and reasonably specifying their relation to their fundamentalist sources?

Consider the criticisms of government support for faith-based charities with which I began. The assumption of such criticism is that any proposed return to the practices of a century ago must involve an uncritical and flat regression to the past and its associated abuses. But we ought to distinguish between religious expressions that succumb to detrimental dispositions from those that critically sublimate such tendencies by a conscious and vigorous re-appropriation of better ones. It is very plausible that some forms of the Christian religion are so objectionable precisely for being reactionary. However, a mature, proactive, and responsible faith is not only not objectionable in this way, it is *prima facie* attractive. It is not *a priori* clear that such a critical faith will reject everything from its past expressions, so doctrine and ritual are not automatic indicators that a religion is regressive.

Mouw utilizes Paul Ricoeur's concept of "second naivete." The sort of re-connection to fundamentalism that Mouw wants to recommend is not a regress to a former simplicity that ignores the difficulties, but a "simplicity beyond complexity," a recapturing of achievements of fundamentalism in the face of those difficulties. This kind of return is not reactionary, but calculated and made with the full recognition of the

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perhaps intractable nature of some evangelical issues. By thus invoking Ricoeur, Mouw provides an account of a possible way for the contemporary evangelical to positively appropriate the evident virtues of the fundamentalist movement. It avoids the vice of dogmatism, understood as the unwillingness to recognize the limits and problems of one's own position. One does not have the dilemma of either rejecting or regressing; converting to a higher-order "fundamentalism" passes through these horns.

So evangelicals can come to responsible terms with their fundamentalist sources and need not be condemned for doing so. But is it really worth it to evangelicals to take a second look at fundamentalism? The value of Mouw's anecdotal approach is not only that it provides a confession of his own participation in undue reprimands of fundamentalism but that it also is a testimony to the power of re-connecting.

For many, this book, authored by someone with great authority on all matters dealing with American evangelicalism, would be enjoyable both for its brevity as well as its trenchant insights. Especially recommended is Mouw's discussion of what he calls "natural spirituality;" the way that the devotions, books, speakers, and hymns we enjoyed in our early days as Christians can pull us back to the former zeal and zest we found when first we began to know Christ.



God's Lesser Glory

"The Diminished God of Open Theism"

Author: Bruce A. Ware, Senior Associate Dean of the School of Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Crossway Books, Publisher, 2000
Paper, 240 pages

*Review by Robbie Castleman,
staff worker with InterVarsity
Christian Fellowship in Florida.*

Bruce Ware's critique of Open Theism is outlined by asking three questions: What does open theism propose? What is wrong with Open Theism's view of God? And, what difference does Open Theism make in daily life? The book is outlined to answer these questions exercising, with only a few lapses of fervent preaching, a quest for honest fairness, a tempered tone, and well-footnoted accountability.

I found the book helpful in honing my own critique of Open Theism after an initial reading of this theology's primary sources. I came away from my introductory reading of Open Theists, good scholars all, rather surprised by the lack of anything compelling, philosophically, Biblically or theologically. Ware does a good job of recognizing Open Theist's sensitive and well-intentioned pastoral concerns, and their desire to be understood as "evangelical" in their commitment to the authority of Scripture. Although well footnoted with complete quotes and historical details, only a scrupulous reading of primary texts would establish the fairness of Ware's assessment.

The continuum that is emerging as Open Theists publish and lecture on this theology of God is noted by Ware, but not overly defined. Gregory Boyd seems to be the most conservative, John Sanders "pushes the envelope" most consistently, and Clark Pinnock ebbs and flows within these current perimeters. Other Open Theists, in the main, respond to these three. However, the margins of my copy of Ware's text are littered with questions to ask Open Theists, and this may be the long-term value of the book.

For example, Ware writes,

If people really want to ground this type of dynamic and mutually learning, interactive relationship with God in prayer that openness advocates often commend, this will require an even further departure from orthodoxy as exhaustive divine present and past knowledge is denied. It will result in both an even loftier elevation of human significance and an even greater diminishing of the richness, fullness, grandeur, and glory that is God's alone. For the sake of commending what amounts to a largely human model of personal relationship, the openness approach, if consistent, leads toward a view in which God is brought down increasingly to our level.

Ware is correct to make the point that Open Theists have to live with inconsistencies and contradictions if they are to be honest. He is also right to admit that orthodox theologians can be dishonest and inconsistent about their paradoxes of faith. The difference

can be that open theists are willing to resolve the tension by eroding the character of God and making God as unknowing as we are in time and space. Classical theists need to acknowledge the paradox of faith, not just existentially, but at the same time hold to the immutability of God's character. The latter has a God who keeps his promises, keeps Covenant, a God to be trusted. Although Open Theists insist that God will get it right in the long run, in the present moment, he's dependent on all the contingencies that bear on that moment and the human dynamic to cooperate. This is 21st century Pelagianism, and not a very sophisticated one at that!

Ware is careful in the way he points up the inconsistencies that are apparent in Open Theism. His general approach is to expose a genuine parallel consideration that most evangelical theologians do not dispute, including Open Theists, and then expose a specific issue under consideration. One place in the book Ware does this especially well is concerning the hermeneutics of "straight forward" texts used by Open Theists and how this has been dealt historically, especially within the Reformed tradition.

Ware comes down hard, and rightly so, on the issue of God's future trustworthiness in the light of Open Theism's contention that God learns in the present moment in dynamic relationship with his people. Open Theists must answer the good questions raised by Ware if their theology doesn't lead to the erosion of faith and the undermining of real pastoral help. The book is helpful to any who want a good guide to investigate Open Theism.

Finale

That All Might be Saved

by Benjamin Milner and Rankin Wilbourne

The wheels are still spinning. The country highway, eerily silent. Your 84' Buick slams to a halt. Furiously struggling to remove your seatbelt, you leap from your car and run to the driver's side window of the overturned vehicle. Heart pounding, you begin to make out slight movements inside the darkness of the mangled automobile frame. Barely audible breaths escape from the passenger's side of the car over the dead body of the driver. Yes, your immediate thought is, 'help'. But the time for that seems to have passed. You know that the next few moments will be the passenger's last. What are you thinking? Is something at stake?

So begins Robert Duval's recent film, *The Apostle*. In the crudest possible way, Buddy (Duval) leads the young dying man to faith in Christ. As Duval closes the boy's eyes in death he purrs to himself, "thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus."

What if Universalism were true? What if all people will be saved through Jesus? Could any human being with integrity really wish for anything else? After all, we proclaim the love of God for *all* people and the power of Christ to save all. In fact, is it even justified to call this a mere 'wish'? One can certainly find scriptural support for Universalism. What else could Paul mean in Romans 5:18 where he writes, "then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all." Six chapters later, Paul seems to express the same sentiment, "for God has consigned all humans to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all" (11:32). Paul's Universalistic convictions do not appear to dampen with age. The apostle writes

in 1 Tim. 4:10, "we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all, especially of those who believe." In light of these texts and others, Universalism cannot be summarily dismissed in a facile and naïve fashion.

And yet, a wholesale affirmation of Universalism invariably creates tension between the teachings of Paul and Jesus. Tension may not even be a strong enough word. If Universalism were true, the very reliability of our Lord's words would be called into question. If Jesus were a Universalist, what can we make of the seemingly incongruous statement in Mt. 25:41, "then he will say to those at his left hand, 'depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'?" Could the sinless one, with absolute integrity, have uttered such a threat knowing that it was ultimately unreal?

Whatever Jesus intends by his repeated teachings on Hell, Scripture certainly affirms the reality of a final judgment. Three examples are sufficient to give pause before leaping to an enthusiastic endorsement of Universalism. In 2 Thessalonians 1:8, we are told that there will be a day "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might." 2 Peter 3:7 speaks of the same plight for disobedient human beings, "the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." In Revelation, John's apocalyptic vision culminates in a final parting of the ways: "Blessed are those who

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wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood" (Rev. 22:14). Does Scripture teach the reality of Universalism or the reality of a final judgment? The Scriptural burden of proof rests on those who affirm Universalism.

Don't dismiss this article as yet another misguided evangelical plea. This is an urgent matter. The stakes in this debate are extremely high. And it is our conviction that high-minded debates about Universalism express themselves in very concrete ways: an affirmation of Universalism will invariably play itself out in our attitude towards missions and evangelism. Dr. Gillespie, whom we greatly respect, has recently said in a sermon that a belief in Universalism does not detract from our desire for missions and evangelism. Certainly, there are people for whom it makes only a slight difference. Some are so overwhelmed by the transforming power of the gospel that the reality of Christ *here and now* is sufficient motivation for missions and evangelism. But I think that such examples are rare. And even in these cases, the main impetus in proclaiming the gospel is to improve quality of life in this world. "Eternal life and a full experience of God should begin today, even for those who ultimately will have eternal life and a full experience of God," so runs the logic. And the words are compelling and true. But how does it honestly play out in your life?

When was the last time that you were on the train to New York City sitting across from a silent but agitated passenger and wondered not only about the state of their life, but the state of their soul? When was the last time that you were severely troubled by the thought that non-Christian friends and family members might be perishing? When was the last time you prayed for their souls? It must be admitted that in the common practice of the church, a widespread belief in Universalism does diminish the urgency for both evangelism and missions. It hardly even needs to be

mentioned that the central impetus behind the greatest missionary ventures in Church History has not been solely about improving quality of life.

A sidelong glance at the history of overseas missions in American Mainline Churches during the 20th Century reveals a prominent alteration in strategy. One can trace a gradual decline in theological focus and a parallel increase in interest in sociological concerns. Could this shift in focus have taken place without the theological underpinning of Universalism?

While it may beg the question, can we reasonably suppose that merely improving the quality of people's lives would have motivated Paul to endure repeated hardships? Would doubting Thomas have made the

long trek to India without the burden of people's eternal well being heavy on his heart? Can we imagine Boniface risking his life as he chopped down Thor's famed sacred oak at Fritzlar (thus challenging the pagan nature worship of native 8th Century Germans) without an imagination alive with thoughts of potential judgment? Can we really picture the 19th Century Baptist missionary William Carey furiously translating the Bible

into multiple vernacular Indian languages with the goal of improving human earthly life?

The story is told of Hudson Taylor before he had gone to China. He had a dream in which he had a vision of a million Chinese, screaming and burning in the torments of Hell. And he went to China, and the world was changed. Similar testimonies could surely be garnered from the likes of evangelists such as Samuel Upon, Jim Elliot, William Wade Harris, Lottie Moon, Betsey Stockton, and David Brainerd. From the mouths of missionaries themselves, what we repeatedly hear about is a passion for souls, both here and in eternity. The stakes are not just mortal. They are immortal.

Dr. Moffett relates his own call to the mission field in his article "Why I am a Missionary." Robert Speer, a great missionary himself, was speaking a Princeton Theological Seminary. Speer took his watch from his

Given our limited knowledge of things eternal, the dangers of believing in Universalism are far greater than the dangers of believing in a populated Hell.

pocket and said: "Young men, this watch could tick for nine and a half years without numbering the unbelievers in China alone." As Moffett says, his obsession over that statistic grew and grew to the point that was finally compelled to go to China. Thanks to the efforts of Missionaries such as Moffett, today that watch would only have to tick two and half years to number those in China who have not heard the Gospel.

The scriptural case is sufficient. The evidence from the history of missions is at least compelling. But even if we admit that the scriptural case is open and the example from history is ambiguous, let this one point be made clear: given our limited knowledge of things eternal, the dangers of believing in Universalism are far greater than the dangers of believing in a populated Hell.

Consider a wager. Let us suppose that there is equal evidence both to affirm and to deny Universalism. And let us grant that both the opponents and proponents of Universalism acknowledge that faith in Jesus has urgent transforming power here and now. A sure and certain conviction of Universalism will help us to avoid embarrassing situations, where we might have warned someone of the dangers of Hell, and will lend us a certain freedom—a less frantic concern for those who don't have faith. A sure and certain conviction of the truth of a populated Hell will perhaps force us into those same embarrassing situations, will certainly make us less popular among our non-believing friends, and may keep us up at night as we fret over the destiny of people that we know and love.

If Universalism is true, there will undoubtedly be some unpleasant temporal consequences for having believed it false. We will have caused ourselves undue anxiety over the possibility of eternal separation from God; we will have alienated many non-Christians for preaching a Gospel that includes the reality of judgment. But in the end, if you believed in hell and were wrong, what have you lost? Nothing! In fact, you would be overjoyed by the surprise that, for every human being, mercy has triumphed over judgment.

But suppose that the Universalism is false and you believed that it was true. And suppose that belief did diminish your fervor for evangelism and missions. Are not the eternal consequences of such a mistake far more drastic than the reverse? In the end, if you did not believe in hell and were wrong, what have

you lost? You would be devastated by the fact that the judgment of God has separated you perhaps from those closest to you? What of those loved ones you had ceased to pray for? Will not the diminished urgency for evangelism appear to be a horror in comparison with which any forfeiture of earthly comfort will appear a triviality?

Universalism is certainly not the official doctrine of the PTS community. But *lex orandi, lex credendi* is a wise and ancient maxim of the church. If a church fails to preach from the Old Testament, one rightly wonders whether the Old Testament is really canon in that church. In the same way, if the possibility of a human being perishing eternally in Hell is never seriously preached, taught, or even considered, one rightly wonders whether we as Christian community really believe in it. Have a position and be able to defend it the next time you are on the train to New York. What are you thinking? The stakes are immortal.



Bibliography

compiled by Chris Ganski

Here is a handful of the many wonderful books out there on evangelism and missions. Evangelism is the lifeblood of the Christian Church without it the Church withers. These books are presented as sources to thinking critically and constructively about the one mandate that *all* Christians are called to act upon: the Great Commission.

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Anchor Books: New York, 1959.

This novel chronicles the tragedy that occurred to a Nigerian tribe when the gospel came with the iron horse of western colonialism. This is a sad story about one of the dark sides of our Christian history. This book is as important as any constructive approach to missions by what it tells us never to do. 209 p.

Bediako, Kwame. *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Orbis Books: Edinburgh, 1995.

Wonderful interpretation of how the gospel has taken root in Africa in distinctly African ways. 276 p.

Bosch, David. J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Orbis Books: Maryknoll, 1991.

Singly, the most comprehensive theology of mission written in the 20th century. A necessary book for any person that plans to minister to another culture and language. 587 p.

Bryant, David. *In the Gap*. Regal Books: Ventura, 1984.

A challenge for us to be hatched from our "pea-sized Christianity" and to embrace a bigger world-sized Christianity. A "world Christian" is someone who

lives in such a way that she can end each day saying, "I know THIS day my life has counted strategically for Christ's global cause, especially for those currently beyond the reach of the gospel." This is standing in the gap.

Conn, Harvie M. *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1982.

From a conservative Evangelical viewpoint, Conn's offers a balanced missionary strategy that stresses the need for both proclamation and social justice in any missionary venture.

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Elliot, Elisabeth. *Shadow of the Almighty: The Life & Testament of Jim Elliot*. Harper: San Francisco, 1958.

Elliot tells the story of her husband's missionary calling and eventual death at the hand of the Aucas Indians he was evangelizing. 256 p.

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Enklaar, Ido H. *Life and Work of Dr. J.T Van der Kemp, 1747-1811 Missionary Pioneer and Protagonist of Racial Equality in South Africa*. A.A. Balkema: Cape Town, 1988.

Inspiring account of a missionary that opposed colonialization in the name of the gospel.

Marshall, Paul. *Their Blood Cries Out: The Untold Story of Persecution Against Christians in the Modern World*. Word Publishing: Dallas, 1997.

This book is a call for the western church to wake from its spiritual complacency and to pray for their brothers and sisters who are dying every hour for their faith. This book shows that "the most oppressed and mistreated peoples in the world, in terms of human rights, are evangelical Christians." (quote from Max L. Stackhouse) 335 p.

McGaw, Francis A. *Praying Hyde (John Hyde)*. Bethany House Publishers: Minneapolis, 1970.

Amazing story of the power of prayer in the life of John Hyde missionary to India.

McQuilkin, Robertson. *The Great Omission: A Biblical Basis for World Evangelism*. Baker: Grand Rapids, 1984.

Muggeridge, Malcom. *Something Beautiful for God: Mother Teresa of Calcutta*. Harper & Row: New York, 1971.

The book based upon the BBC production of Mother Teresa's work in Calcutta, and consequently bringing her to the attention of the whole world. Muggeridge is a master of prose and offers Mother Teresa's life as a profound testimony to Christ. 156 p.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1989.

Brilliant consideration of what the gospel means in a pluralistic society. This is a sensitive, theoretical, theological and practical response to the western church's timidity to evangelize the world. Newbigin is not advocating triumphalism, but confidence in the truth of the gospel for all people. 252 p.

Packer, J.I. *Evangelism & The Sovereignty of God*. InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, 1961.

If God is in control of everything does that mean the Christian can sit back and not bother to evangelize? Or does active evangelism imply that God is not really sovereign at all? Packer answers no to both of these questions and shows how the sovereign God is an incentive for evangelism. 126 p.

Piper, John. *Let the Nations be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, 1993.

Theological reflection upon how missionary activity is ultimately done for the glory of God.

Ritchie, Mark Andrew. *Spirit of the Rainforest: A Yamomamo Shaman's Story*. IslandLake Press: Chicago 1996.

Profound story about how the gospel stripped of its western accoutrements can transform a culture. If you read one book on this list please read this one. I cannot recommend it enough. It will forever change your perception of the "noble savage" and some of the falsehoods that anthropology has tried to propagate concerning Christian interaction with tribal peoples. Be warned this book is very graphic, but an overwhelming testimony to the power of Christ to change lives and entire societies. 271p.

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